THE Beacon Biographies OF Eminent Americans

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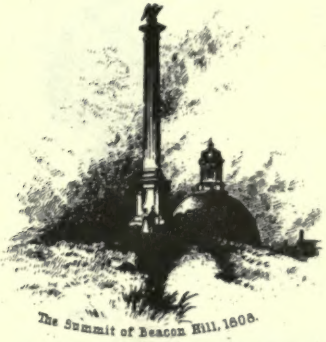

The Summit of Beacon Hill, 1808.

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HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

BY

GEORGE RICE CARPENTER

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PREFACE.

There is no lack of material for a life of Longfellow. A large part of his own journal has been published, and his brother and his friends have given in sufficient detail the necessary data. The preceding narratives of his life, however, have been written by his immediate contemporaries, who have told us of Mr. Longfellow as they knew him in the fifties or the sixties. My aim has been to present the same facts with such comments as are now appropriate — the comments natural to men who have been born since Longfellow's best work was done, and who, though they honour him not less than did his contemporaries, must of necessity judge him, and the little world in which he moved, from a different point of view.

G. R. C.

New York City, September, 1901.

CHRONOLOGY.

1807

February 27. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine.

1822

Entered Bowdoin College in the autumn, as a Sophomore.

1826

Fourteen of his youthful poems, written in 1824–26, published in *Miscellaneous Poems Selected from the United States Literary Gazette.*

May 15. Sailed for France.

1826–29

Travelled and studied in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, returning in August, 1829. In September was appointed Professor of Modern Languages in Bowdoin College.

1830

Published four text-books: *Novelas Españolas, Manuel de Proverbes Dramatiques,*

Elements of French Grammar, and *French Exercises.*

1831

Married to Mary Storer Potter.

1832

Published three more text-books: *Saggi de' Novellieri Italiani, Syllabus de la Grammaire Italienne,* and *Cours de Langue Française.*

1833

Published *Coplas de Don Jorge Manrique, Translated from the Spanish.*

1834

Nominated as Smith Professor of Modern Languages in Harvard University.

1835

Published *Outre-Mer: a Pilgrimage beyond the Sea.*

1835–36

Travelled and studied in England, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and Germany.

1835–36 (*continued*)

November, 1835, his wife died in Rotterdam.

December, 1836, entered on his duties at Harvard.

1837

Took rooms in the Craigie House, Cambridge.

1839

Published *Hyperion: a Romance;* and *Voices of the Night.*

1842

Published *Ballads and Other Poems.*

Third visit to Europe.

Published *Poems on Slavery.*

1843

Published *The Spanish Student.*

Married to Frances Elizabeth Appleton.

1845

Edited *The Poets and Poetry of Europe.*

1846

Published *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems.*

1847

Published *Evangeline: a Tale of Acadie.*

1849

Published *Kavanagh: a Tale.*

1850

Published *The Seaside and the Fireside.*

1851

Published *The Golden Legend.*

1854

Resigned his professorship at Harvard.

1855

Published *The Song of Hiawatha.*

1858

Published *The Courtship of Miles Standish and Other Poems.*

1861

Death of his wife.

1863

Published *Tales of a Wayside Inn.*

1867

Published *Flower-de-Luce.*

1868

Published *The New England Tragedies.*

1868–69

Last visit to Europe.

1867–70

Published *Dante's Divine Comedy. A Translation.*

1871

Published *The Divine Tragedy.*

1872

Published *Christus: A Mystery* and *Three Books of Song.*

1874

Published *Aftermath.*

1875

Published *The Masque of Pandora and Other Poems,* containing *Morituri Salutamus,* which he read at the semi-centennial of his college class.

1878

Published *Kéramos and Other Poems.*

1880

Published *Ultima Thule.*

1882

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow died on March 24 at Cambridge.

In the Harbor (1882) and *Michael Angelo* (1883) were published after his death.

1884

March 2. Bust of Longfellow unveiled in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

HENRY WADSWORTH
LONGFELLOW

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

I.

THE ancestors of Longfellow, on his father's side, were Yorkshire men, and, it would seem by their name, of a stock early notable for its physical characteristics. The family from which the poet sprang was of Horsforth, where, in 1647, an Edward Longfellow made over a house and lands to his son William. This William was a clothier in easy circumstances, possessed of several houses and their appurtenances. His son William, born in 1650, had evidently a strain of roving blood. In 1676 he came to New England, not apparently urged by religious fervour, for he is referred to as "a little wild" and as "not so much of a Puritan as some." He was so fortunate as to marry Anne Sewall, of Newbury, then a girl of sixteen, the sister of Samuel Sewall, diarist, witch-

judge, chief justice, and, after Cotton Mather, the best known figure of that remarkable era. Longfellow's name occurs from time to time in Sewall's diary and letter-book. On one occasion he was markedly "ill-conditioned and outwardly shabby." On another, Sewall lent him money, procured him credit, and "charged him to be frugal." On still another the shrewd Yankee sent a message to his brother-in-law's well-to-do English father, announcing the birth of a son to the young emigrant, intimating that money for buying stock for the Longfellow farm would not come amiss, and flatly stating that the Sewalls had already advanced "upwards of a hundred pounds" to get the young man out of debt. In 1690 William Longfellow went again a-roving, this time as ensign in the Newbury company that joined in the luckless expedition against Quebec, led by Sir William Phips — Phips, the rough-hewn and resolute type of the first

generation of native Americans, whose vigour was that of giants. The vessels, hastily retreating, met the October storms in the Gulf of St. Lawrence ; and the brigantine which bore Longfellow was probably that which "was, in a very stormy night, stranded upon the desolate and hideous island of Antecosta [Anticosti]," as Cotton Mather relates in one of the rare brilliant passages of the *Magnalia*, while narrating the deeds of his hero, His Excellency Sir William Phips. Sewall gives another date in his diary, and calls the spot "Cape Britoon" ; but at all events it was thus that the English Longfellow came to his death by sea.

The emigrant left five children. The fourth, Stephen — the first of the name — obviously without inheritance, turned to a manly handicraft, the blacksmith's trade. His fifth child, Stephen — the second of that name — brought back the line to gentler callings. Graduated from

Harvard in 1742 and made M.A. in 1745, he became thereupon the schoolmaster of Falmouth (now Portland), thus fixing the seat of his branch of the family for several generations. He was a trusted public servant, parish clerk, town clerk, register of probate, clerk of the court; and it is recorded that he "was a man of piety, integrity, and honour," that his favourite reading was history and poetry, and tradition bears witness to his fair penmanship, his methodical habits of mind, and his inexhaustible good humour. His eldest son — the third Stephen — was born in 1750, and rose to greater distinction, being for some years a member of the legislature, then state senator, and for many years a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. His son — the fourth Stephen and the father of the poet — graduated from his grandfather's college in 1798 (he was already, said a college friend, "a well-bred gentleman when he left the paternal mansion for the univer-

sity''), and followed the hereditary pursuit of the law, holding also, like his ancestors, honourable public offices. Clear-headed, firm, just, respected by all, he transmitted to his son the virtues essential to happiness and prosperity.

Longfellow's mother, Zilpah Wadsworth, came of a more active stock, though she was a descendant of the gentle Priscilla Alden. She was the eldest daughter of General Peleg Wadsworth, who had been prominent in the desultory warfare along the Maine coast during the Revolution. He had settled in Falmouth (Portland) in 1784, and had built, and built well, the first brick house in the town — the house in which Longfellow spent his early years. Later he bought a huge tract of wild land on the Saco River, and became the founder and patriarch of the town of Hiram. Of his many children, two entered the navy. One, Alexander, lived to attain the rank of commodore. The other, Henry, for

whom the poet was named, perished on the *Intrepid*, the famous ketch on which Decatur ventured into the harbour of Tripoli, and with a scanty force seized and burned the captured *Philadelphia* under the very guns of the castle, and which on the night of September 4, 1804, was again sent into the same harbour, as a fire-ship, on a still more perilous mission.

It was from the Wadsworths that Longfellow drew the romantic side of his nature — the spark of flame, the stimulus that led him into the world of the imagination, the active mind that made him the explorer of strange tongues and a pioneer in the development of his native literature. But he drew even deeper from his father's stock. From the Longfellows came the even-mindedness, the methodical scholarship, the content and self-control, the tact and discrimination which had made his fathers trusted men of affairs and honour-

able public servants, and which now became the solid basis of a poet's genius.

Portland, the city of Longfellow's boyhood, has from its situation a perennial beauty; but in the early years of the nineteenth century, undefaced by the boisterous and unsightly trade which the web of railroads has brought, it had the pensive, delicate, almost girl-like charm which we associate with old New England coast towns — a peaceful loveliness, an atmosphere in which the sharp tang of the salt air is mingled with the freshness of upland breezes. From the higher windows of the noble old house in which the Longfellows lived, the eye could sweep a whole half-circle, from the White Hills in the distance, with Mount Washington plainly visible, round to the lowlands, the tide river, the bay, the fort, and the light-house. In "My Lost Youth" the poet has called together the memories which formed the background of his childhood: the pleasant

streets, the overshadowing trees, the black wharves, the "Spanish sailors with bearded lips," "the sheen of the far-surrounding seas," "the islands that were the Hesperides" of his young dreams — lines which, with their undertones of ambition and restlessness, have touched the truest chords of boy life in the old seaports, as Whittier's "Barefoot Boy" has touched the chords of boy life in the country.

Longfellow was born and bred under a fortunate star. His family was not rich, but it had means and distinction. From the days of Stephen, the blacksmith, each generation had added to its prosperity and dignity. The long toil of upbuilding a name and acquiring the barest means of existence were not his, as they were Whittier's, who, born in the same year, had sprung from a neighbouring stock in the same Massachusetts county, simple farming folk, from father to son, each renewing the old bitter

warfare with the soil and the elements, under conditions virtually unchanged. Portland, too, though remote from the great centres of civilisation, was still within its borders. Books the boy had in sufficiency. His father's library contained Milton, Pope, Dryden, Cowper, Moore. He took delight, says his brother, in *Don Quixote* and *Ossian*, and would "go about the house declaiming the windy and misty utterances of the latter." He read each number of the *Sketch-book* (it began in 1819), he says himself, "with increasing wonder and delight, spell-bound by its pleasant humour, its melancholy tenderness, its atmosphere of revery." He went early to school, though not to the public school, the manners and methods of which were too rough and crude; and he had excellent masters, among them Jacob Abbot, not many years his elder. At seven he was half through his Latin grammar. It was an ideal training, one

almost impossible now to secure for the American lad, subject to so many diverting, disturbing, and overstimulating influences. His father was a busy man, but he was much at home; and his firmness, his method, his logic of life, must have counted for much in the boy's development. His mother was gentle and loving, not burdened and harassed by social duties and frivolities. The members of the family were all fond of music. Henry himself played the flute well. On Sunday the Bible was read and studied; and the home was permeated with the spirit of that milder Calvinism of the early Unitarians, who ceased terrifying the young into virtue, and filled them instead with noble thoughts, sound ideas, and the spirit of high endeavour.

Under such influences, Longfellow grew up a "true, high-minded, and noble" boy, as his sister relates, gentle by nature, but not effeminate. A school-

mate describes him as handsome and frank, one "who looked you square in the face," with eyes full of expression and clear as a spring, and thoughtful, though not melancholy. "He had no relish for rude sports, but loved to bathe in a little creek on the border of Deering's Oaks, and would roam through the woods at times with a gun, but this was mostly under the influence of others. He loved much better to lie under a tree and read." In vacation he often made visits to the Longfellow farm at Gorham, where he saw his grandfather, the portly judge, who still wore the garb of olden times, "long-skirted waistcoat, small-clothes, and white-topped boots, his hair tied behind in a club, with black ribbon"; or to "Wadsworth's Grant," on the Saco, the wild principality of his other grandfather, whose military figure, cocked hat, and buckled shoes awed the lad as much as his tales of the Revolution delighted him. It was here per-

haps that he found the inspiration for his first poem, which he wrote when thirteen, on the Battle of Lovell's Pond, the scene of which lies not far distant. He was disappointed, it is said, that the verses were coldly criticised by his friends, when they appeared anonymously in the Portland *Gazette;* and well he might have been, for they were ringing lines, beginning

"Cold, cold is the north wind and rude is the blast
That sweeps like a hurricane loudly and fast,"

and ending

"They are dead; but they live in each patriot's breast,
And their names are engraven on honour's bright crest,"

and augured well for the author's sense of rhythm and feeling for melody.

It was inevitable that Longfellow should go to college, and the family

tradition might naturally have taken him to Harvard. But Maine had just been set apart as a state, and local pride was strong and well deserved. Bowdoin College had been opened in 1802, and Longfellow's father was a trustee. No spot could have been better chosen for a seminary of learning, as the phrase then ran ; and it is to be doubted whether the modern curriculum would have given the boy a more solid preparation for the life he was to lead. Brunswick, says the well-written history of the college, "literally occupied only a small clearing among the indigenous evergreens. On every side but that which the river bounded, the dwellings stood in close proximity to the forest, which stretched for miles, a shady and unobstructed promenade. The earlier graduates must have many recollections of social and solitary walks through these quiet grounds. Their memories have sadly failed, if they do not still

recall the chief features of the scene—the level earth, through whose slippery carpet of scanty herbage and withered pine leaves shot up in their season the frequent blueberry and wintergreen, the air charged with resinous odours, the blackened tree-trunks which told of former fires, the subdued and sombre light, the tinkling cow-bells, and the gentle rustle of the breeze in the branches above." To this secluded spot on the skirts of the primeval forest, fit for the calm isolation of undergraduate training, came Longfellow in 1822, entering as a sophomore. He was, as a friend described him, "slight and erect, his complexion light and delicate as a maiden's, with a slight bloom upon the cheek; his nose rather prominent, his eyes clear and blue, and his well-formed head covered with a profusion of brown hair waving loosely."

The college abounded in earnest, vigorous young men, mostly fresh from

the farms — as his classmate Hawthorne notes in *Fanshawe*, written when he was scarcely graduated, and with Bowdoin evidently in his mind — the deep sunburn slowly fading from their cheeks as they toiled manfully at their books. From the accounts given in Cleveland and Packard's admirable *History of Bowdoin College* we may see that there were few boys then in the institution, save such as were cut off by early death, that did not achieve distinction of some sort. In the class preceding Longfellow's was Franklin Pierce; and in his own were Hawthorne, John S. C. Abbott, and half a dozen others, whose names, now scarcely remembered, were in their time widely known in New England. The course of study was prescribed and narrow, but it was thorough and as high in its standards as any then given in the United States. Longfellow was well grounded in the classics and in mathematics; he had heard good lectures

on the natural sciences and in philosophy; and he wrote clear and simple English prose. The college gave him seclusion during the trying period of adolescence, and sent him forth trained for the battle of life, but not overtrained, with buoyant health, habits of industry, application, and self-control, a considerable stock of useful knowledge, and high ambitions. His undergraduate years had been a prolongation of his home training.

The narrow range of the curriculum had left him an abundance of leisure for reading and for writing. His first letters home show that he had discovered Gray, the last that he had found out Chatterton; and contemporary accounts make it clear that he was well acquainted with the somewhat scanty store of books in the college library. He sent verses to the Portland *Gazette*. When the *United States Literary Gazette* was founded, in 1824, at Boston, he became one of its

regular contributors; and his name began sometimes to be coupled with those of Bryant and Percival. Fourteen of these verses were republished in 1826 in *Miscellaneous Poems Selected from the United States Literary Gazette*, several of which he did not disdain to include in later editions of his works. Their vogue was not so startling as that of the fluent scriptural *Sketches* (1827), which were the fruit of Willis's undergraduate years at Yale; but they were recognised as the product of genuine feeling and of real talent, and the "Hymn of the Moravian Nuns at Bethlehem" and the "Burial of the Minnisink" showed their author to be of the stuff that poets are made.

Looking back now on these early verses, the importance of which in Longfellow's development has not been clearly seen, we may perhaps say that, unlike much youthful poetry, they were essential to the evolution of his power.

By comparison it was a considerable body of verse that he produced in the years 1824–26 — twenty-three pieces in all, or more than he wrote between 1827 and 1836, while his mind was wholly occupied with his professional training and duties. They were, moreover, though quickly written, the result of continued thought or observation. In Longfellow's reading we find no mention of Scott, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Coleridge, or even of Wordsworth; and we find only the slightest traces of their influence. Bryant's early work he knew and at times imitated, but he had not felt the power of the highly emotional school of contemporary English poets. His distant models, if models he had, were the calmer versifiers of the older style, who had taught him to observe the facts of nature quietly and accurately, without the exaggeration that comes from passion. Thus he received a real training in form, but no such

bent as would affect his later work. This was fortunate, for his path led him for many years apart from the composition of verse. When he returned to it he was a man in years and experience. He was then possessed by a genuine passion for poetry; and, with his mind enriched and his emotions matured, he was able to begin at once his greater work without passing then through an apprentice period. In verse, as in so many other matters, his early years had given him the requisite training, but had left him unspoiled.

It was as inevitable that Longfellow should wish to be a man of letters as it was that he should go to college. In the winter preceding his graduation he thus laid his inclinations before his father, under the date of December 5, 1824: "I want to spend one year at Cambridge, for the purpose of reading history and of becoming familiar with the best authors in polite literature;

whilst at the same time I can be acquiring a knowledge of the Italian language, without an acquaintance with which I shall be shut out from one of the most beautiful departments of letters. . . . After leaving Cambridge, I would attach myself to some literary periodical publication, by which I could maintain myself and still enjoy the advantages of reading. Now, I do not think that there is anything visionary or chimerical in my plan thus far. The fact is—I will not disguise it in the least, for I think I ought not—the fact is, I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature. My whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centres in it. There may be something visionary in *this*, but I flatter myself that I have prudence enough to keep my enthusiasm from defeating its own object by too great haste. . . . Whether Nature has given me any capacity for knowledge or not, she has at

any rate given me a very strong predilection for literary pursuits; and I am almost confident in believing that, if I can ever rise in the world, it must be by the exercise of my talent in the wide field of literature. With such a belief, I must say that I am unwilling to engage in the study of law."

To this plea the father's reply was characteristically brief and wise. "A literary life, to one who has the means of support, must be very pleasant. But there is not wealth enough in this country to afford encouragement and patronage to merely literary men. And, as you have not had the fortune (I will not say whether good or ill) to be born rich, you must adopt a profession which will afford you subsistence as well as reputation." It was then agreed that Longfellow was to take up the profession of law, though it was understood that, if possible, he was to have one more year of freedom to spend at Harvard in the study of *belles-lettres*.

But no sooner was this compromise determined on than fortune intervened. The trustees of Bowdoin wished to establish a professorship of modern languages; and one of their number, deeply impressed by the literary character of Longfellow's rendering of an ode of Horace, at his final examination, proposed that he fit himself for the post. The father, only desirous that his son should have the means of earning an honourable and sufficient livelihood, offered no objection, and was willing to provide the money for several years of foreign study. Thus was Longfellow preserved from one arduous profession, which would probably have proved distasteful to him, and thus did he adopt one which was eventually to prove almost as displeasing; for teaching, as he was to discover, is a profession like its sisters, demanding its full measure of preparation, time, and strength, and leaving, to one who performs fully his daily and yearly tasks, scant leisure for the Muses.

II.

WHEN Bowdoin College showed its alertness by planning to establish a chair of modern languages, it was conforming, at this early date, to the influences of a wide-spread interest in modern languages and in modern literatures. For centuries the ancient languages had been almost the sole basis of education and cultivation. Slowly the modern world was coming to see that it possessed literatures of its own equally worthy of scholarly investigation, and that the new tongues were not only of great practical, but of great educational value. In 1816 Harvard had offered a professorship of the Italian and Spanish languages and of *belles-lettres* to George Ticknor (a young Bostonian of wealth and scholarship, sixteen years older than Longfellow), who, after receiving the best education that America could give him and enjoying to the full its social and intellectual advan-

tages, was then travelling and studying in Europe. His aim, as he himself described it at the time, consisted "chiefly in seeing many different persons, learning their opinions, modifying my own, and, in general, collecting that sort of undefined and indefinite feeling, respecting books and authors, which exists in Europe as a kind of unwritten tradition, and never comes to us." Drawn to Göttingen, while thus assimilating the best of Europe like a philosopher and a man of the world, by its reputation for learning, he was quick to see the meaning of the new German scholarship, then scarcely existing elsewhere — its range, its thoroughness, its method. Thenceforth he was determined to master his special subject in this rational and thorough-going fashion; and from 1819, when he began his duties in Cambridge, to 1836, when he was succeeded by Longfellow, he was the foremost exponent in America of the new scholarship and the new education.

To the young Harvard professor, whom he was destined ten years later to succeed, the Bowdoin professor-elect went for advice in 1826, on his way to the vessel that was to take him to Europe for his three years of apprenticeship. Ticknor naturally urged him to go to Göttingen, for his more mature and philosophic mind had learned there to appreciate the meaning of the movement which was to change the whole nature and method of European and American scholarship. But Longfellow's plans were already made. Bowdoin wanted a teacher of languages, particularly of French; for German was then an unfashionable and outlandish tongue. It was to France, therefore, that he went. The choice was, though he little knew it, of great importance, but fortune, as usual, favoured him; and he had by instinct decided wisely. Ticknor was a generation ahead of his time, even at Harvard. Longfellow was not ready

for the huge stores of German erudition and its patient delving. He was a simple lad; and the new learning, as we shall see, was foreign to his tastes and his genius. What he needed was a familiar knowledge of several European languages. What he craved was the spirit of the Old World. Though his choice, perhaps, cut him off forever from great scholarship, it opened to him his peculiar realm in the world of poetry.

Ticknor had spent his four years of European apprenticeship (1815–19) in a systematic investigation of foreign thought and life. His means were ample. His letters of introduction opened all doors. His mind was mature. His valuable diary, of the first importance in the study of early American literature and scholarship, is full of important data. Formal, learned, unimaginative, he records what he observed in high places; and his words

are as of one who speaks with authority. Longfellow's journal and letters tell a different tale. His means were modest: his father seems to have allowed him six hundred dollars a year. His letters were few. His tastes and impulses were those of a poet. He saw a world of colour and picturesqueness of which Ticknor never dreamed. In each land he lived in he saw some people of mark, but mainly the people at large. He learned the languages he needed with great facility and accuracy; and, though he cared not a fig for politics and matters of great import to the student of history and government, he mastered the very essence of European life and literature, going, as was his wont, straight to the heart of his quest.

He landed in Havre, June 15, 1826, and went straightway to Paris — "a gloomy city, built all of yellow stone, streaked and defaced with smoke and dust; streets narrow and full of black

mud" — and promptly set himself at his task. He did not stray far until October, when he tramped along the Loire — a charming journey, charmingly related in his *Outre-Mer* — but was soon back again at his work, and by February, 1827, could write home that he was well satisfied with the knowledge he had acquired of the French language, and was off for Spain. There a fortunate fellow-traveller, Mr. Slidell, describes him as "just from college, full of all the ardent feeling excited by classical pursuits, with health unbroken, hope that was a stranger to disappointment, curiosity that had never yet been fed to satiety. He had sunny locks, a fresh complexion, and a clear blue eye, all indications of a joyous temperament." In Madrid he met Washington Irving, busily and cheerily at work on his *Life of Columbus*. He saw Spain thoroughly and with buoyant delight, made another language his slave for life, and by

January, 1828, was in Italy. Here he found other Americans, among them George W. Greene, a young man of similar tastes and ambitions, who became his lifelong friend, and who, many years later, in dedicating to Longfellow his life of General Greene, recalled their Italian days and nights. "We talked and mused by turns, till the twilight deepened and the stars came forth to mingle their mysterious influence with the overmastering magic of the scene. It was then that you unfolded to me your plans of life, and showed me from what 'deep cisterns' you had already learned to draw. From that day the office of literature took a new place in my thoughts."

Longfellow had attained an even better knowledge of Italian than of Spanish, and was about passing on to Germany, in pursuance of his general plan, when late in 1828 he heard through his father that the Bowdoin trustees, hard pressed

for ready money, were growing doubtful about the professorship, which had been only informally agreed on, and were hinting at a tutorship instead. The young man was indignant; for he had, after much labour and considerable expense, nearly completed his preparation for his duties. At all events, there was no use in turning back when his hand was set to the plough; and, with his father's consent, he remained six months in Germany, gaining some familiarity with the language, which he found difficult, and studying for a while at the far-famed Göttingen, over which he was evidently not especially enthusiastic. No lectures in modern literary history were given during his period of residence, and his previous training had not prepared him to profit by a study of the ideals and methods of university instruction and by the systematic use of the large library.

He reached home in August, 1829.

The Bowdoin trustees had repented, and in September voted his appointment as professor of modern languages, with a salary of eight hundred dollars, appropriating him also a hundred dollars a year as librarian. He began his work at once, throwing into it a vigour, thoroughness, and method which in a few years put him at the head of his profession. His lectures and recitations were carefully prepared, he was on good terms with his students, and he knew his business. Besides attending to the routine of instruction, he had also, like a good artist in a new craft, to forge his his own tools. Text-books there were none, and he set to work to make them. In 1830 he translated L'Homond's French grammar — a poor little book, but a convenient and definite one; edited a collection of French *Proverbes Dramatiques*, and made a Spanish reader. In 1832 he followed these by reading-books in French and Italian, and by a syllabus

of Italian grammar, written in French. His theory was sound and at that time novel. The text-books in use, as he wrote his father, were "extracts from the best and most polished writers of the nation; food for mature minds, but a fruit that hangs beyond the reach of children, or those whom ignorance of a foreign language puts on the footing of children. But the little collection which I propose to publish unites the simplicity and ease of conversation with the interest of a short comedy which turns upon some situation in common life, and whose plot illustrates some familiar proverb which stands at its head by way of motto." With so practical a grasp of his subject, it was no wonder that his tasks were performed so skilfully.

Meanwhile he had not been idle in the wider service of his profession. He prepared for use in the upper college classes a set of lectures on French, Italian, and Spanish literatures, and

another on the literary history of the early Middle Ages, "beginning with the Christian Fathers and coming down to the origin of the modern languages" — precisely the ground covered years later so magnificently by his younger contemporary, Adolf Ebert. On such topics Longfellow's scholarship was, and remained, largely superficial. The modern languages he knew accurately, and he used them fluently; but he had no grasp of history, no grasp of literature as an organism. For the sake of his later work this was fortunate. Once drawn into the toil of constructive research, as was Ticknor, it is unlikely that his slumbering genius for poetry could have long kept alive. The same general comment can be justly made on his contributions to the *North American Review*, which began in 1831, and which consisted chiefly of articles on the origin and early stages of the Romance languages and on Italian dialects. The

facts he stated clearly and coldly, as they had been conceived by others. But his heart was plainly not in his task, as it would not have been in the summarising of law cases. He was performing a professional duty, but performing it in a perfunctory fashion.

Longfellow's early career as a teacher was thus busy and successful, and the years went happily by. In 1831 he was married to Mary Storer Potter, of Portland, a woman of much charm of person and cultivation of mind; and his journal records his entire content with his life, his home, and his work. His linguistic articles and his text-books attracted attention in other institutions, and he was spoken of for professorships at New York University and at the University of Virginia. In 1834 the inevitable promotion came in the shape of an invitation to Harvard College to succeed Mr. Ticknor, who was soon to resign his chair. The salary was to be

fifteen hundred a year; and the president suggested that he should reside in Europe, at his own expense, for a year or eighteen months, "for the purpose of a more perfect attainment of the German." Both the invitation and the suggestion were gladly accepted; and Longfellow and his wife sailed for England in April, 1835.

We must now pause for a moment in our following out of Longfellow's professional successes to trace the submerged current of literary ambition, subordinated for a considerable period to his more pressing and important duties, but soon to regain its force and to become the dominant impulse in his life. In 1832 he had printed in the *North American Review* a somewhat perfunctory article on Spanish devotional poetry, in the course of which he had translated several stanzas of the beautiful funereal ode written in the fifteenth century by Jorge de Manrique — an ode which

illustrates to the full the melancholy side of the Spanish temperament, and which is but one form of the haunting question, again and again appearing in mediæval literature, to which Villon also, in the same century, gave expression in his *Où sont les neiges d'antan?* This excellent version he completed and published in book form, with the original Spanish, in 1833, thereby winning the praise of those who knew what difficulties lay in the way of so faithful a rendering. In the same year he began to give final form to an uncompleted work which he had begun in Germany. It was then, to use his own words, to be "a kind of sketch-book of scenes in France, Spain, and Italy." The idea was obviously suggested by the various similar volumes of Washington Irving, of whom he had early been an ardent admirer. Separate sketches he had already published in the *New England Magazine* in 1831–33; and in 1833–34 the same sketches were issued

in two numbers, under the title of *Outre-Mer: a Pilgrimage beyond the Sea.* In 1835 the complete work appeared. It consisted of little incidents connected with his travels in Europe, two or three pleasant tales, much after the fashion of Irving, and parts of some of his recent essays about European literature. The tone was gay, for the most part; and the critics all praised the book, associating it almost invariably with Irving's work, though at least one remarked upon the incongruity between the indolent attitude of the mere pleasure-seeker, which Longfellow assumed, and his known industry and methodical scholarship. But the book made the public sure of two things. First, the author knew not only books, but men; not only languages, but life. He had caught the subtle essence of Old World romance, which Ticknor, with all his philosophic questionings, had missed. This was what the New World wanted of the Old, not its facts or

its theories, but its inconsistencies, its strange contrasts, its antique medley of rich and varied experience, the strange, the grotesque, the majestic heritage which the New World long insisted that the Old World must possess, even while the Old World was wearily looking to the New for the Eldorado of romance that must exist where the whole cycle of civilisation is beginning anew. Second, if the author began with Irving's voice, he ended with his own. There is nothing of merriment and cheering wit in the Italian chapters or in the prefixed pages, "The Pilgrim of Outre-Mer." The latter sounded the real note of the book, and of the undercurrent of emotion in Longfellow's own attitude toward Europe. "The Pays d'Outre-Mer, or the Land beyond the Sea, is a name by which the pilgrims and crusaders of old usually designated the Holy Land. I, too, in a certain sense, have been a pilgrim of Outre-Mer; for, to my youthful

imagination, the Old World was a kind of Holy Land, lying far off beyond the blue horizon of the ocean. And, when its shores first rose upon my sight, looming through the hazy atmosphere of the sea, my heart swelled with the deep emotions of the pilgrim when he sees afar the spire which rises above the shrine of his devotion." It was this exaltation of mind with reference to Europe, this reverence for antiquity, this attitude of the pilgrim, that was a new note in American literature; and it re-echoed in the hearts of many.

Longfellow's second period of travel and study opened merrily. He was now a man of distinction in his profession. His means were improved, his letters of introduction were excellent, he was better acquainted with the world, and prepared to see Europe otherwise than as the boyish pilgrim. He was apparently in no haste to begin his German tasks, to which he did not seem drawn. After

three weeks in England, where he made many acquaintances, among them the Carlyles, he went with his wife to Stockholm, and spent the summer there and in Denmark, working hard at both Swedish and Danish, and finding great pleasure in both literatures, in the northern life, in which he delighted, and in a host of Scandinavian friends, many of them scholars of repute. In Holland, through which he was to pass on his way to Germany, he was detained by his wife's illness; and there she died in November. No one who has made a careful study of Longfellow's published letters and diaries, as well as his works, can doubt that this was the turning-point in his career. Up to this time he had been a boy, despite his years. At first, as will be remembered, he had ardently desired the life of a man of letters. Thwarted in this wish, and seeing the necessity of a profession, he had adopted that which lay nearest to the life he

craved. As a teacher, he had done his work faithfully and had achieved success. But there was naught in his calling to stimulate his activities. His intellectual life had gone quietly on. He knew more, but he was not more of a man. Nothing in his printed work or in his journal shows signs of the penetrating insight that comes only when one has grappled the real issues of life, and which one may have, be he prince or poet or artisan, only when the veils are rent, and when joy or disappointment or disaster reveals to him the naked truths that govern man's existence. Now, struck by this great blow in a strange land, just when new vistas of life were opening before him, the subtle transformation was wrought. The routine of methodical intelligence, the profession of the language master, thenceforth palled upon him. That was a mere business of the head, in which he was competent, but not great. His genius

lay in his heart, in his emotional nature, in his unusual power for receiving the varied and delicate impressions made by life and literature, and in weaving them into new forms, full of suggestiveness and beauty. Ticknor, who had himself known sorrow, wrote him that his safety lay in intellectual employment; and during the ensuing winter, which he spent at Heidelberg, he made a pitiful effort to concentrate his mind on historical studies in German literature, but his method was superficial. He accomplished his bounden duty in mastering the language; and, while his intellectual powers were in abeyance, he drank deep at the fountain of German romantic literature, and on the side of his emotions grew ten years in one. In the following autumn, 1836, he returned to Cambridge to begin his new duties. His journals show a different style, his life had set itself in a different form. He was to be a teacher for many years yet,

but teaching from this time on was never the stronger current in his life. The poet had been born.

III.

ALTHOUGH Longfellow was for eighteen years to serve as a professor at Harvard, his chief interest no longer lay in the work of instruction and of research. He performed his duties, however, with scrupulous care and efficiency. Ticknor, whom he followed, had thrown himself from the very first into a propaganda for the reorganisation of the college curriculum and policy of administration, and for fifteen years had not wearied in his efforts to set the learning and discipline of the institution on a sounder basis. Fresh from his European studies, he had seen that the American college could at that time be nothing more than a good gymnasium, the training of which should prepare young men for university study; and to that end he had given definiteness and method to the instruction in the department of modern languages. Longfellow had apparently no interest what-

ever in the broad questions of college policy and administration, and was content to take things pretty much as he found them; but he kept the department up to its high standard of efficiency. His duties were to direct the work of his four foreign assistants, who taught, respectively, French, Italian, Spanish, and German, to give, himself, one lecture a week throughout the year, usually on literature, and during the summer term to give one or two semi-public written lectures each week on *belles-lettres*. It was the first task that proved onerous. The instructors were often unskilled teachers, and were constantly changing. It was the professor's duty to be present at least once a month at the recitation of each student in each language. In 1839 he records that three days in the week he went into his class-room between seven and eight, and came out only between three and four, with one hour's intermission, and that the other days

were largely taken up in preparation for his work. But the students felt that the work was sound — the best test and the best reward.

The lectures were more to his taste. The oral or informal course was now on *Faust*, now on Dante, now on various mediæval subjects. They consisted mostly of translation, with a running commentary; and to listen to such a sympathetic treatment of poets by a poet was a privilege not often open to students in any institution, here or abroad. His formal summer course was the subject of more anxious thought. Usually he followed the history of a modern literature; but he sometimes allowed himself more special and less academic material, as in 1838, when he included a large part of the matter afterwards published in *Hyperion* in his course on the lives of literary men. The written lectures, in marked contrast with the work of this sort which he had done in former years,

were unpedantic. He was slowly coming to the wisest position for a poet who writes on poetry — neglecting the systematic treatment of historical facts, and devoting himself rather to the sympathetic interpretation of literature that he loved or of the sides of literary history that most appealed to him.

In spite, however, of the pleasanter parts of his work, his duties were, as a whole, irksome ; and his journal contains many entries which show impatience with his lot, if not a little peevishness. "Perhaps the worst thing in a college life," he writes on September 10, 1838, "is this having your mind constantly a playmate for boys, constantly adapting itself to them instead of stretching out and grappling with *men's* minds." A year later, September 10, 1839, he records : "I could live very happily here if I could chain myself down to college duties and be nothing but a professor. I should then have work enough and

recreation enough. But I am too restless for this." The same month he writes to his father that "my work here grows quite intolerable."

In spite of this somewhat petulant discontent with the profession which he had praised so warmly in his Bowdoin inaugural address in 1830, Longfellow led an enviable life, and one not really unhappy. As he probably grew to see, his vocation was not only honourable, not only gave him a fair portion of leisure, a dignified standing in the world, and the means for a comfortable existence, but by its routine disciplined his wandering thoughts and increased his natural clarity and simplicity of expression. The man of letters without another calling is too often so much a man of leisure that he soon parts company with the world of facts, and comes to live only in a world of dreams. Moreover, his lot had fallen in a pleasant town and among congenial people. In a letter to

George W. Greene (August 6, 1838) he thus describes his habits: "I live in a great house which looks like an Italian villa; have two large rooms opening into each other. They were once General Washington's chambers. I breakfast at seven on tea and toast, and dine at five or six, generally in Boston. In the evening I walk on the Common with Hillard, or alone; then go back to Cambridge on foot. If not very late, I sit an hour with Felton or Sparks. In nearly two years I have not studied at night, save now and then. Most of the time am alone; smoke a good deal; wear a broad-brimmed black hat, black frock-coat, and a black cane. Molest no one. Dine out frequently. In winter go much into Boston society."

The "great house" was, of course, Craigie House, too well known to require description. A Tory mansion, it dated back to the middle of the eighteenth century. When Colonel Vassall

fled, at the outbreak of the Revolution, it had been seized by the state, and had served as Washington's headquarters in the campaign which led to the evacuation of Boston. Then, after passing through divers hands, it was bought by the lavish Andrew Craigie, whose fortune had been gained by selling medicines to the American army. From his impoverished and eccentric widow, who wore a turban and read Voltaire, Longfellow hired at first two rooms — the north-east and south-east chambers — and afterwards others until many years later the old house came by purchase into his hands. It was a noble colonial dwelling, dignified, commanding an excellent view of the Charles and its meadows — a fitting abode for one who, from training and temperament, had so little experience with the cruder side of New World life and literature.

The Cambridge of the late thirties was the Cambridge best preserved to us in

Lowell's admirable essay. A secluded village, of which the college was at once the material and the spiritual centre, it was closely bound by affinity to its large neighbour, Boston, itself a secluded city, not in close communication with the cities of the Middle States, but independent and prosperous, the hub of its own determined and well-informed little universe. The young professor, already a known man, and one who found it easy to make friends and impossible to make enemies, was at once admitted into the most interesting social circles in Cambridge and Boston, and he had apparently only to choose the men with whom he had most in common. His natural choice lay with those of his colleagues and neighbours who had the greatest breadth of mind and cultivation, the deepest interest in the general world of letters. With men somewhat older, such as Prescott, Sparks, and Palfrey, he was on excellent terms; but his chief

friends were men of his own age — C. C. Felton, then professor of Greek and afterwards president of the college, at first his most intimate associate ; Charles Sumner, then a young lawyer, with whom his friendship grew apace ; G. S. Hillard, best known to a later generation through his series of school readers ; and Henry R. Cleveland. These four were drawn together and to Longfellow by kindred tastes and ambitions, and from their informal dinners and meetings the little group came to style itself the Five of Clubs. In this pleasing and stimulating set of friends and acquaintances, to whom must be added the shy Hawthorne, the genial Samuel Ward of New York, and others whom we need not here mention, Longfellow led, it would seem to us, the happiest of all possible mortal lives, rich in friends and projects. He was obviously far less melancholy than he thought himself, and sufficiently master of his genius to enter upon his real work.

The first evidence of the totally new spirit in which Longfellow regarded life was contained in two articles in the *North American Review* for 1837, the first on Hawthorne's *Twice-told Tales*, the second on some recent translations of Tegnér's *Frithiofs Saga*. The former not only shows a new style, rich, picturesque, smacking of German romanticism, but reveals a new attitude toward the land of his birth. He has discovered that romance is not alone a foreign product. "Truly, many quaint and quiet customs, many comic scenes and strange adventures, many wild and wondrous things, fit for humorous tales and soft, pathetic story, lie all about us here in New England. There is no tradition of the Rhine nor of the Black Forest which can compare in beauty with that of the Phantom Ship." The second essay is the best, to modern eyes, of all his shorter prose writings, and, both by its excellent translations and its charm-

ing descriptions of Swedish life and scenery, proclaims even more clearly that the author's whole being had been quickened. Even in the article on Anglo-Saxon literature, which appeared in 1838 in the same magazine, and which is written more in the dull and structureless style of his older essays, the new fire is apparent, as when he comments: "Thus did mankind go reeling through the Dark Ages, quarrelling, hunting, hawking, singing psalms, wearing breeches, eating hot bread, rocked in cradles, buried in coffins — weak, suffering, sublime. Well might King Alfred exclaim, Maker of all creatures! help now thy miserable mankind!" The spirit of pedantry is dead in the scholar who can thus write with feeling and see with the eyes of the imagination.

Equally good in tone was *Hyperion*, which was published in 1839, and of which fifteen thousand copies were,

within a few years, sold in America alone. "I called it *Hyperion*," he says in a letter, "because it *moves on high*, among clouds and stars, and expresses the various aspirations of the soul of man." Plainly in the style of Richter, with all the mingled grandeur and grotesqueness of the German romanticists, it is scarcely now a favourite with the adult reader, though the young, obedient to some vague embryonic law, still find in it for a season the pleasure, the thrilling melancholy, which their grandfathers found. It bears the marks of a type of literature then just decaying. The gloomy hero, stricken by grief, wanders lonely in cities and in forests, lamenting we scarce know what in lyric passages which thrill us only superficially. As with Châteaubriand's *Atala*, we wonder why the young man could not engage in some honourable business, follow some decent calling, and learn to see life more calmly and more

clearly. But it is only fair to add that this was Longfellow's final feeling also, though based rather on sentiment than on reason; for Paul Fleming's complaints cease when his eye falls by chance on the tombstone inscription at St. Gilgen, which becomes the motto of the book: "Look not mournfully into the Past, it comes not back again; wisely improve the Present, it is thine; go forth to meet the shadowy Future without fear, and with a manly heart." Thus did the young American lay the ghost of that European melancholy, born of imperfect health and economic disorder, that had for half a century been the plague of modern literature. It was this new, this purgative and reactionary emotion that pardons *Hyperion*. Unlike its cloud of predecessors, it showed the path of escape from unrest and discontent; and the remedy was one befitting the resolute American spirit.

Two other points make *Hyperion* im-

portant in the record of Longfellow's life. First, it is the author's prose at its best and fullest. Soon after its publication, when Longfellow began to recognise the strength and variety of his poetic powers, he set aside his various projects in prose romance. The form was alien to his genius; and he made but one more experiment in it, in *Kavanagh*, in which, years later, he tried unsuccessfully to fan the embers of his youthful ambition. Second, as Longfellow himself frankly acknowledged, the emotional experiences of Paul Fleming, the sad hero of *Hyperion*, were his own, only thinly disguised, during the year of bitterness that followed his wife's death. Even the heroine, Mary Ashburton, was Miss Appleton, whom he then met in Switzerland, and who afterwards became his second wife. This crudity of conception was natural in a romantic period, when most writers were accustomed, in the Byronic fashion, to wear their hearts on their sleeves.

It was also natural to a young artist working in a material ill-suited to his special talents. In the prose tale, Longfellow could scarcely take a step beyond the path worn by his own feet. In his lyric poetry, where the narrative element was subordinated, he was almost wholly relieved from this unfortunate error; and his contemporary verses, to which we must now give our attention, were of much greater value and more enduring than was the ambitious *Hyperion*.

Contemporaneous with *Hyperion* and closely akin to it in origin and in character was a little group of six poems, all written between 1837 and 1839 — the "Psalm of Life," "The Reaper and the Flowers," "The Light of Stars," "Footsteps of Angels," "Flowers," and "The Beleaguered City." To them Longfellow owed his first wide popularity; and they — and, in reality, they alone — constitute the work of his first poetic period, which is characterised by

its strong didactic character. Longfellow's own attitude toward these poems was one of reverent surprise. A lover of poetry and an experimenter in verse, he had long cherished high ambitions; but he had no reason to think of himself as one who could move deeply the whole reading public of his race. If he had conceived such an idea of himself, he would have believed that such a result could not be accomplished save by the most persistent effort. And yet suddenly, to his own surprise no less than to that of his friends, these verses began, as it were, to sing themselves in his heart; and he transferred them to paper without special effort. At first he regarded them as an exclusively personal expression of feeling. The "Psalm of Life" he kept by him for some time, without showing it to any one. Then, noting the effect made upon the friends whom he allowed to see his work, he became persuaded that what

he had written was less a record of personal emotion than a song for the world. Thus was accomplished the corollary to the new phase of life on which Longfellow had entered at the death of his wife. Up to that time he had been trying to live by the head, as it were, rather than by the heart. The shock, the grief, changed the whole false trend of his existence, and threw him back upon his emotions. Then, after several years of vague aspirations and ardent musings, during which a slow associational process went on in his impressionable mind, the marvellous birth of his art came almost without warning, following that intricate and mysterious law which psychologists are still reverently pondering, whereby from many personal experiences recorded in the brain is finally evolved, in certain minds, an impersonal artistic product, having a form and individuality of its own, apparently separate from those of the author's experience, though created by it.

Part of the popularity of the new poems was due to delight in their form. Longfellow's previous verse had been marked by that peculiar flatness and thinness of tone so characteristic of early American poetry and of much of eighteenth-century British poetry. It did not please the ear. The little group of verses which he now published had a wholly different ring — the same full tone of exaltation that sounds throughout *Hyperion*, and that was in both cases assimilated from contemporary German prose and poetry. The rhythm was resonant, the rhymes rich, and the metre employed — a simple quatrain form — came freshly to the ears of readers wearied with the elaborate stanzas or the monotonous blank verse. Here, all felt, was at last a singer.

But the great popularity of the new poems — one may safely say of the new note in American poetry — was due to their didacticism. At no period in the

history of the country was there a more genuine and wide-spread interest in matters of the spirit, and nowhere was this interest stronger than in New England. The old Calvinism was crumbling away, the old fearful attitude toward the present and the hereafter was disappearing. The early Unitarians and the Transcendentalists had been leaders in a movement which had a strong popular basis. People felt, rather than knew, that the old religious systems were essentially false, that man was not powerless in the hands of a foreordaining fate, that life was not merely to be endured, that nature was not a mere ornament of man's tomb, and the world but the scene of his disgrace. They were thankful to the theologians and philosophers who could help them understand why they felt thus, but most grateful to a poet who could cast their new feelings into song, interpreting emotion by emotion. Longfellow's message in the "Psalm of Life" and in the ac-

companying poems was therefore received gladly by the people at large no less than by the select few. No one else had uttered it. "Thanatopsis" had preached at best a mournful Stoicism. This was the gospel of activity, of hope —a gospel which has become increasingly associated in the minds of the whole world with our land and our nation.

It must be frankly acknowledged, however, that these early poems, so full at that time of a new gospel, have with the passage of years become somewhat commonplace. The message once gladly heard by many becomes erelong a familiar postulate to all. We feel instinctively now what was only imperfectly realised in 1838; and the charming verses, then so effective, have become favourites mainly of the young, or of those who, like children, are yet undeveloped emotionally. This is partly due to the fact that there is an inherent

weakness, to our generation, in Longfellow's method of expression. In these didactic poems he was, it is pleasant to think, following the Germans, the youngest and most earnest of European nations at that time, and that with which America had the strongest intellectual affinities. But the main characteristic of the writings, both in prose and verse, of the German romanticists, was an exaltation of mind which revealed itself by an attempt to see in the workings of nature a symbolic meaning. Many entries in Longfellow's diary show how thoroughly captivated he was for a few years by this dangerous trick of the mind. If he stood on a bridge and saw the tide sweeping up the little river, he fancied that it was a messenger from the ocean to inquire why the land, in a season of drought, was not paying its customary tribute. On a wild March day he records: "Through the gusts of the mighty north wind and the snow,

the church bells seemed to cry for help. Winter has come back for his umbrella. Begone, old man, and wag not thy hoary beard at me!" This same vicious habit of thought is the weak spot in these early poems. It was for a time pleasant and soothing to think that death was a reaper who gathered the grain for use, the flowers for ornament; but the parallelism is merely sentimental, and must soon wear thin. Our new insight into natural laws of health and disease make it less and less possible to conceive of our children as dying because it is the divine will that they should form a nosegay in heaven. It is to similar defects in much of the didactic work of Longfellow that its apparent lack of permanence is due, or rather its lack of intellectual permanence. It came from the emotion, it appealed strongly to contemporary emotion, and it must, for centuries perhaps, appeal to childish or youthful emotion. That is surely honour

enough. Poetry that continues for generations to meet the test of changing feeling and increasing knowledge is rare indeed.

The volume containing the poems thus discussed, *Voices of the Night* (1839), contained also several of his college verses and the translations that had appeared in *Outre-Mer* and in *Hyperion*. Once started in the new path, the poet found that his professional duties did not prevent him from indulging frequently in his better-loved pursuit; and the little volumes came quickly. In the next, *Ballads, and Other Poems* (1842), there were several pieces in the didactic style: "The Village Blacksmith," teaching the lesson that "thus at the flaming forge of life our fortunes must be wrought"; "It is not always May"; "The Rainy Day," written in the old house in Portland; "Maidenhood," which indicates the especial appeal of his verse to women; "Blind Bartimæus,"

which flashed into his mind while he was reading the Greek Testament; and "Excelsior," suggested by the motto on the arms of the state of New York. Some of these rivalled in popularity the earlier pieces, especially "The Rainy Day" and "Excelsior," which have now become the special and undisputed property of the young. It is plainly noticeable, however, that a new note was creeping into his verse. "Blind Bartimæus" and "Excelsior," are in narrative form, and the leading pieces in the volume, "The Skeleton in Armour" and "The Wreck of the Hesperus," are ballads pure and simple, without a touch of didacticism. Once fully started, the stream was clearing itself: the poet was passing from moralising, in which he proved eminent, into plain narrative verse, in which he had no contemporaries who were his superiors.

The impulse for narrative had, in-

deed, been synchronous with the crude impulse for moralising, though less strong. On May 3, 1838, he recorded in his journal: "It is raining, raining with a soft and pleasant sound. I cannot read, I cannot write — but dream only. The visits of many pleasant thoughts, the coming and going of strange and foreign fantasies, have left my mind ajar, and it swings to and fro in the wind of various opinions. I have been looking at the old Northern Sagas, and thinking of a series of ballads or a romantic poem on the deeds of the first bold viking who crossed to this western world. . . . New England ballads I have long thought of. This seems to be an introduction. I will dream more of this." A year later he has "a plan of a heroic poem on the Discovery of America by the Northmen, in which the Round Tower at Newport and the Skeleton in Armour have a part to play." Before he went further with the idea, he read in a newspaper in

December, 1839, the mention of the shipwreck on Norman's Woe, near Gloucester, of the schooner *Hesperus*. The names caught his fancy, and he determined to write a New England ballad. On the 30th of the month he was sitting by the fire, smoking and musing, when suddenly the impulse came to him; and he wrote his ballad without an effort. At first he had "a great notion," he recorded, "of working upon the people's feelings" by printing his verses as a broadside, with a crude picture — a notion which shows how consciously he was following older models. "The Skeleton in Armour" he composed with almost equal rapidity about a year later, after a considerable period of reflection on the general topics suggested by the armed skeleton found at Newport. Though frowned upon by his fastidious New England friends, Felton and Sumner, who much preferred the moralising tone, it was welcomed by the more enthusiastic

Samuel Ward, a far better judge of what Americans as a body would like, and was through his kind offices accepted by the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, and published in January, 1841, with a marginal gloss, after the fashion of *The Ancient Mariner*.

These two simple ballads, apparently so spontaneous, and now so widely known as to seem almost commonplace, were the fruit of much meditation. Others besides Longfellow had felt that what had happened and what was happening in the United States was not without its romance; and, in prose, Cooper, Irving, and Hawthorne had, by preference, dealt with native scenery, character, history, and traditions. But in verse Longfellow was a pioneer, in that he applied to our own needs the poetical forms employed elsewhere for the treatment of similar material. He was thus so fortunate as both to discover the richest vein of his own genius and to

found a new *genre* in American literature. Henceforth his didactic philosophising tended to decrease, and his skill in rapid and simple narrative became yearly greater. The field that he opened by these early verses has been tilled by many, notably by Whittier, who may justly be said to have surpassed Longfellow in the ballad itself. He had indeed been attracted — some years before Longfellow — to subjects taken from local history; but, misled by his narrow education, he had followed the British conventions of the eighteenth century, and attempted to cast his material in the form of a larger and more intricate narrative. Once shown the way, however, he was able, thanks to his homely life and his more intimate acquaintance with New England customs, to produce ballads that smacked of the soil. "The Wreck of the Hesperus," all must notice, is a mere general narrative of shipwreck, imperfectly localised by the men-

tion of a special reef, but in other respects equally applicable to other coasts. How little Longfellow felt the more individual character of the scene is shown by the fact that he evidently had only a very vague notion of where Norman's Woe is, and enters gravely in his journal some years later, when author and poem were alike famous, that he tried to find it when he happened to be in Marblehead, some twenty miles from Gloucester Harbour. With this absence of all distinctive detail, which runs throughout all his work, and makes clear that he was at best a poet brought up in a library, and not in the open fields, in the woods, or by the sea, may be contrasted Whittier's just and vivid "local colour."

In both 1840 and 1841 Longfellow mentions in his letters his five-act drama, *The Spanish Student*, of the success of which he felt more than usually confident, but which he was resolved to keep

by him until it could be improved in detail after the excitement of composition had passed. In 1842 it appeared in serial form, in *Graham's Magazine*, and was in 1843 published in book form. As a play, it was, as might have been expected, worthless; for Longfellow, though he was fond of the drama, was, like Tennyson, ignorant of the principles of the playwright's art. What he wrote, therefore, was at best simply a narrative poem in dialogue, divided artificially into acts and scenes. Even as a poem, it appears to the reader of to-day as scarcely worthy of great praise. The characters are mere lay-figures, whose mirth or pain alike fails to move us; and the plot is, in all respects, unoriginal. What the critic usually fails to see, however, is that to the contemporary reader, as to the youthful reader of to-day, the apparently empty verses fulfilled an unexpected function. Originality of plot, insight into character,

the struggle of opposing wills, the artful loosing of the playwriter's knot — what were these to those whose lives were so strenuously ethical, so laboriously industrious, as to be virtually devoid of colour or charm! It was Spain that attracted and captivated the fancy, as in Irving's *Conquest of Granada:* Spain and the gypsies, a wondrous land of wine and serenades and duels, a wonderful people, unbound by the rigid and intricate laws of Church or State. *The Spanish Student* was thus, so far as its matter is concerned, what *Hyperion* had been in prose — a successful experiment in opening to the half-starved American imagination a golden, far-away realm of romance.

In 1842 Longfellow obtained leave of absence on account of ill-health, and spent six months in Europe, mainly at Marienberg on the Rhine. A water cure restored his health; and in his new-found mental and physical equilibrium he saw Europe again with sane eyes, as he had

during his boyish years of apprentice travel, and not with the somewhat sickly and Germanic pessimism that had overtaken him during his second visit, in the sad year that followed the death of his wife. He made one new and fast friend, the German poet Freiligrath. He saw new cities; and everywhere his attention, now no longer distracted by a false and ponderous romanticism and, as was his wont, never occupied with matters of sociological interest, was free to centre in calm meditation on what might be styled the historical romance of Europe, or, perhaps better, its charm as an historical panorama, as a land where nature and art both convey to the informed and impressionable mind a multitude of associations with great men and great events.

It was not, however, with Europe that his next poems concerned themselves, but with America. On his way homeward he had stayed with Dickens in

London, and had been greatly impressed by his *American Notes* — a book, as time has now shown to all, not so much unjust as inane and wholly beside the mark — and especially by the best chapter in it, that on slavery. On the return voyage, confined by bad weather to his cabin, he occupied himself by writing seven short poems dealing with the same topic, which he immediately issued in a little volume with the title *Poems on Slavery*. Thus once in a long lifetime and for a few restless days the most popular poet in the United States allowed his muse to concern itself with problems of public weal. At all other times it was only of the fairyland of the past, of the remote, or of the romantic that he sang. This is nothing against him: it is simply a fact that characterises his general temper of mind. Even in this instance, it is mainly on the pictorial side of slavery, so to speak, that he touched — the slave singing at midnight, the planter selling

his quadroon daughter, the shackled skeletons in the sands, the dreams that rush through the mind of the dying slave that was in his own land a prince. At the time when Longfellow wrote, the Abolition Party, to which Whittier had for years devoted his whole genius, had won substantial recognition and was no longer in desperate need of powerful adherents; nor would Longfellow's gentle verses have caused him to be ranked as a mighty champion on that side in any event. But they were undoubtedly of considerable value indirectly to the cause in that — unreal and untypical as they were — they supplied the people at large with definite visualisations, conveyed in words of peculiar melody, haunting pictures, as it were, of what might have been and might still be under the evil system. It is unfortunate that we must add that much of this good effect was spoiled when, in 1845, the author weakly yielded to his publisher's plea, and con-

sented to omit these verses from the first collected edition of his works.

In point of mere workmanship the *Poems on Slavery* show that Longfellow was rapidly attaining a remarkable mastery over rhythm and rhyme. Now that more recent schools of English poetry have thrown more especial emphasis on resonance and richness in these particulars, the poems may not strike one as so remarkable; but there is no doubt that then and long after there was a striking contrast between the flat, high-keyed chant of most American verse and such full-throated music as that of

> "Loud he sang the psalm of David!
> He, a negro and enslavèd."

The close of the first period of Longfellow's career as a poet is sharply marked by his marriage in July, 1843, to the heroine of *Hyperion*, Mary Ashburton, who was in reality a Miss Appleton of Boston, a woman of twenty-six,

beautiful, well educated, well-to-do. To one who scrupulously follows each faintest trace in the development of Longfellow's art, it is plain that here was the last parting of the ways. He was only thirty-six, and his mind had shown no sign of hardening. Indeed, he was apparently at the point, in the slow ripening of his intellect, of greatest susceptibility to outside influences. Educated by books and foreign travel only, familiar mainly with fanciful and sentimental lines of thought, acquainted only vaguely with American life and aspirations, it was yet possible that some rude shock, like that which changed him from an indifferent scholar into an enthusiastic poet, might tear his life out from the rut which it was fast wearing, and open for him new fields for more vigorous and genuine effort. Could he, like Whittier, have learned what it was to live by the sweat of his brow ; could his good angel have translated him to the Far West,

where in the open stinging air he could have toiled hard and fought long with man and nature; could, even in the East, some wholly new influence have overwhelmed him; could he have married some vigorous Western girl, who had small patience with his books and his foreign tastes; could any of these cataclysms have befallen him, it would either have put an end forever to his versifying or have made him a poet of far higher rank, one who sings not of the past, but of the present and the future, not of distant lands, but of home, not of gentle passion, but of the real warfare of life. But none of these extraordinary might-have-beens came like a *deus ex machinâ* to wrest his development from its normal course; and with his happy marriage to a woman of his own type began a life frictionless, lacking in stimulus, conventional, but fortunate in that, though it put an end to the possibility of increasing his vital force, it

afforded him the most favourable opportunity imaginable for the cultivation of the powers which he already possessed.

Three further volumes, all appearing in 1845–6, close fittingly this first period of Longfellow's career — his *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, the last echo of his professional studies; *The Belfry of Bruges*, an epitome, as it were, of the progress he had thus far made; and the first collected edition of his poetical works. Of the *Poets and Poetry of Europe* Prescott wrote that "it is a delightful bouquet of wild-flowers, picked off from old tumble-down ruins and out-of-the-way nooks and by-paths where the foot of the common traveller seldom treads." The description is exact. The translations were charming, the notes and introductions interesting, and the volume is still a convenient and valuable storehouse of pleasing versions of many good poems. As a work of intelligent

scholarship, it has a less high reputation. Longfellow had long since ceased to be vitally interested in his profession; and even at his best he had never brought to it more than care, industry, and good taste. Unexcelled as a translator, he had not caught the new and powerful spirit of organised research, or even of criticism based on other grounds than personal preference; and this last result of his studies proves how fortunate it was for the world of letters that the death of his first wife wrenched him from the even course of mediocrity as a scholar.

The other books were more important. The dominant note in *The Belfry of Bruges* was that of foreign romance, as the title indicates; but it was romance of the best and most enticing sort, free from the melancholy pessimism and Germanic grotesqueness of *Hyperion*. In days when the journey to Europe was made more rarely and photographs and

books of travel were less common, it was through such poetical pictures as those contained in Longfellow's verse that young Americans, with a craving for romance that they could not satisfy in their own national history, were thrilled by the skilful description of scenes rich in the charm they longed for. The narrative element, though not absent, was subordinate; and the volume is marked by the reappearance of the moralising element, which was apparently, from the entries in his journal, encouraged by his wife. But it was no longer the crude moralising of "Excelsior," a rough series of impossible scenes which the mind was asked to conceive of as illustrating a definitely stated theory of human endeavour. Here, on the contrary, in "The Old Clock on the Stairs," for example, the moral, though no less obvious, is not forced upon one; and the reader is allowed to draw his own conclusions, or perhaps to draw none.

after contemplating a set of consistent pictures. The lyric element, moreover, is more marked. The verses sing themselves; and, if we read Longfellow's work chronologically, it is at this point that we may say with assurance that the poet first exhibits the full tokens of mastery over his art. The time was therefore ripe for the edition of his collected verses, which was issued with somewhat unnecessary sumptuousness by Carey & Hart of Philadelphia.

If Longfellow had died at this juncture or had ceased to write, the world would have justly estimated him in the course of a few years as an exceedingly competent teacher of modern languages, a man of fine literary tastes and wide reading, with a skill in translation unexcelled by any contemporary, the author of a considerable number of very popular poems, some of which were crudely didactic, but the best of which were so gracious, so tender, so winning,

in their recalling of romantic scenes in Europe, and in the presentation of gentle moods of joy and melancholy, resignation and aspiration, as to gain a large measure of approbation. It would have been recognised that he had been an important influence in early American poetry, and that his career had been closed just as he seemed to have attained real proficiency in his art; and such of his separate poems as were special favourites would have still maintained their right to a place in all collections of popular verse. But the general verdict would probably have been that it was a misfortune that so marked a talent should not have had an opportunity of employing itself, in more mature years, on greater themes. Such probably, too, would have been Longfellow's final judgment upon himself; for every page of his journal bears witness to his ambition and zeal, and in the sonnet which he wrote in 1842, on reaching the age of

thirty-five (but which was not published until after his death), he confesses: —

"Half of my life is gone, and I have let
The years slip from me and have not fulfilled
The aspirations of my youth, to build
Some tower of song with lofty parapet.
Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret
Of restless passions that would not be stilled,
But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,
Kept me from what I may accomplish yet."

Longfellow's friends, however, were inclined to set a higher value upon his work, partly because of their affection for him, partly because of his dignified position and social standing, partly because of the prevailing interest in New England both in all that harked back to European culture and in the poetical treatment of moral themes. There was considerable indignation, therefore, at

two critical articles appearing at about this time, written respectively by Margaret Fuller and by Poe, which were more discriminating in their praise.

Longfellow records in his private journal for 1845 that "Miss Fuller made a furious onslaught upon me in the New York *Tribune*. It is what might be called a 'bilious attack.'" As a matter of fact, the slur was undeserved. There was nothing furious in Miss Fuller's criticism, which was calmness itself, and nothing that was personal, save in the regrettable but very natural remark that the somewhat gaudy portrait of Longfellow, prefixed to the volume of his collected poems, made him look like "a dandy Pindar." The essence of the review was simply this, that Longfellow had been overpraised and that he was not a great poet. The genius and function of the great poet she described with much sanity, though perhaps a little narrowly; and she showed clearly that,

with anything like this standard in mind, Longfellow fell far short of real greatness. The sanity of her judgment and its justness may be gathered from the following extracts, which give a fair idea of the whole: —

"Yet there is a middle class, composed of men of little original poetic power, but of much poetic taste and sensibility, whom we would not wish to have silenced. They do no harm, but much good, (if only their minds are not confounded with those of a higher class,) by educating in others the faculties dominant in themselves. In this class we place the writer at present before us. We must confess to a coolness to Mr. Longfellow, in consequence of the exaggerated praises that have been bestowed upon him. When we see a person of moderate powers receive honours which should be reserved for the highest, we feel somewhat like assailing him and taking from him the

crown which should be reserved for grander brows. And yet this is, perhaps, ungenerous. It may be that the management of publishers, the hyperbole of paid or undiscerning reviewers, or some accidental cause which gives a temporary interest to productions beyond what they would permanently command, have raised such an one to a place as much above his wishes as his claims, and which he would rejoice, with honourable modesty, to vacate at the approach of one worthier. We the more readily believe this of Mr. Longfellow, as one so sensible to the beauties of other writers and so largely indebted to them, *must* know his own comparative rank better than his readers have known it for him. . . .

"And now farewell to the handsome book, with its Preciosos and Preciosas, its Vikings and knights and cavaliers, its flowers of all climes, and wild flowers of none. We have not wished to depre-

ciate these writings below their current value more than truth absolutely demands. We have not forgotten that, if a man cannot himself sit at the feet of the muse, it is much if he prizes those who may; it makes him a teacher to the people. Neither have we forgotten that Mr. Longfellow has a genuine respect for his pen, never writes carelessly, nor when he does not wish to, nor for money alone. Nor are we intolerant to those who prize hot-house bouquets beyond all the free beauty of nature; that helps the gardener and has its uses. But still let us not forget — Excelsior ! !"

Poe's criticism was no less keen, but it was apparently based more upon personal dislike. Nor was this unnatural. Bred with the idea that he was to inherit his protector's fortune and to live the leisurely life of the Virginia gentleman; badly taught, badly trained, with physical and mental characteristics and habits that hindered him from competing with

his fellows on equal terms — in spite of his genius, he was, when thrown suddenly upon his own resources, incapable of supporting himself by methodical industry. The times, too, were not favourable. It was almost impossible for the man of letters pure and simple to live by his art; and productions that would to-day have insured him wealth, then scarcely sufficed to provide bread for his mouth and clothes for his back. Under such circumstances, it was perhaps only human that he should envy this favoured child of fortune, early trained to labour, to whom scarcely more than ordinary industry had brought a distinguished position, and whose virtue, talent, and conscientious fulfilment of his not difficult duties had been rewarded with hosts of friends, wealth, and fame. All this is but a surmise, however. The fact remains that Poe, though acknowledging Longfellow's good qualities, criticised his work with some sever-

ity on two special points — the crude didacticism of much of his earlier work and the almost complete lack of originality in all his work. Both points were, in reality, well taken. The first, indeed, may be passed over without further comment as now generally recognised. The second admits of more debate, though not if we accept Poe's premises. For him the function of the literary artist was to construct an absolutely new and individual thing of beauty, so far as human genius may avail for such a task. At this toil he himself laboured consistently and successfully. Longfellow's conception of his task was entirely different. He felt himself to be, for the most part, a sort of middleman, who collected beautiful thoughts and tales wherever he could, and then reshaped and resung them in the way most natural to him. This was the process he employed in his best work, which we have still to consider, as well as in that of his earlier

years; and we should be thankful that it was so — the world is grateful for artists of this type as well as for those of Poe's type. Longfellow and his friends should have been grateful for the excellent analytic criticism which Poe based on these narrow and faulty premises, and might, indeed, have been so, had not Poe unluckily insisted on calling Longfellow a persistent plagiarist. His real meaning seems to have been that Longfellow was usually unoriginal, when judged by Poe's peculiar standard of originality; but he felt bound to make his charge good by particular instances, and so accused Longfellow of plagiarising, in *The Spanish Student*, from an equally bad play of Poe's. The facts showed only a general resemblance between the passages quoted. Longfellow wisely made no attempt to vindicate himself, but his friends rushed to his defence, and the discussion that ensued was, as is usually the case, wordy and

useless, for each party defined its terms to suit itself.

We can only add, in closing this account of contemporary criticism on Longfellow's work, that it seems a great pity that it could not have been phrased more courteously and accepted more readily by Longfellow and his friends; for the strictures of both Miss Fuller and Poe were clearly reasoned and acute, and the poet might have profited by giving them more serious consideration, with the result, perhaps, of modifying his method in some important particulars.

IV.

THE years of Longfellow's second marriage were years of peace and prosperity. The only disturbing element in his rarely fortunate lot were the duties of his profession, which he still felt to be downright drudgery. Yearly he records in his journal his distaste for them and the conviction that he was born for higher things. The preparation of lectures hung over him like a nightmare, and he grudged each day that teaching stole from poetry. Finally, realising that his own means, with those of his wife, were ample for his needs, he resigned his professorship in 1854. It is to be doubted whether he was much the gainer by this late escape from a profession which, with its long vacations, its freedom from financial responsibility, and its pleasant associations, is, comparatively speaking, so light a burden for a man's shoulders. Certainly it

would appear from his journal that the unaccustomed vacuum in his time was thereafter more frequently filled with petty duties or indolent pleasures, and that his poetic tasks were not one whit advanced. One cannot help feeling, indeed, that it would have been better for him and his art if he had been thrust early into the fierce struggle of business competition, or had devoted himself like Whittier to a great cause, and that his dissatisfaction with the simple task he had chosen, and his laying it down at an age when men are just beginning to do their work well, reveals something of the lack of strenuousness that was the one flaw in his admirable character.

In spite, however, of his tedious duties — made more obnoxious by the weak state of his eyes — Longfellow's life was one of unsurpassed comfort. At his marriage his father-in-law had bought for him Craigie House, rooms in which he had so long occupied; and in that beau-

tiful mansion, with its ample grounds, he was surrounded by all (except rigorous labour) that has power to make man content. His wife was beautiful and accomplished, and took much interest in his composition; and he apparently shared with her his plans and even his minor poetical fancies. It is to be doubted, however, whether her influence was good in this field; for she seems to have encouraged him in his sentimental tendency to read a moral into the plainest and barest facts of nature, and there is an unconsciously ludicrous entry in his journal where he records that, walking on a bridge with her and noticing "a fat man fishing for cunners, . . . we leaned for a while on the wooden rail, and enjoyed the silvery reflection on the sea, making sundry comparisons. Among other thoughts we had this cheering one — that the whole sea was flashing with this heavenly light, though we saw it only in a single track;

the dark waves are the providences of God; luminous, though not to us; and even to ourselves in another position." But, vicious as was her taste in such respects, she was apparently in all essential matters an ideal wife; and Longfellow found in her the intimate and tender companionship which his nature craved. Their life seems a round of innocent pleasures — visits to receive and pay, friends to meet, drives and walks, plays and concerts and balls for the evenings, or, more commonly, reading aloud by the fireside. Of this marriage also came several children, whom their father loved with an exceeding tenderness which is revealed by many references in his journal and verses.

In the solution of the pressing problems that confronted society in his times Longfellow took little interest. His affection for Sumner seemingly led to earlier convictions than he would otherwise have formed as to the duty of the government

toward slavery, just as his sympathy for Freiligrath in his persecutions during the revolutionary period of 1848 led him to enter in his journal the conviction that "so long as a king is left upon his throne there will be no justice in the earth." But the strife of opinion, the manly warfare of mind that alone leads to progress, repelled and disgusted him. He complained that his friends annoyed him by turning his quiet study into a tavern room with their smoke and their political disputation; and his literary feelings were outraged by the hisses and interruptions with which Sumner's florid addresses were received, and by the sight of Emerson pleading and reasoning with his fellow-citizens, similarly reluctant to be convinced. His real pleasures lay in his home and his family, in his wide reading — in several languages and on many topics, although mostly in *belles-lettres* — and in his friends. With contemporary authors he was not on really

intimate terms, except with his younger neighbour, Lowell. Hawthorne he knew as an old college acquaintance, who had become a man of letters of kindred tastes, Whittier scarcely at all, and Holmes not much better, though he belonged to the same "set." Emerson he saw frequently, and admired sincerely; but Emerson's opinion of Longfellow seems to have been much like that held by Margaret Fuller, and there was little community of thought and aspiration between them. On the other hand, he held fast to most of his earlier Cambridge and Boston friends, particularly Sumner, who was apparently the dearest of them all, and made many new ones, especially Louis Agassiz, who seemed second only to Sumner in his affections. To these pleasant relationships must be added those arising from a host of distinguished acquaintances and correspondents. There was no house in America that saw more men of mark, both native and foreign,

and no man in America more cordially welcomed as a host or a guest.

In the midst of this pleasant environment, Longfellow lost the superficial melancholy and uneven excitation of his *Hyperion* days, and was, as he said, determined to be "calm and happy, rather than excitable and nervous-minded." He was, too, more resolved than ever to build his lofty parapeted tower of song. The opportunity came in a tale of an Acadian girl's vain quest for her lover, which a friend of Hawthorne's had suggested to him as good material for a romance. Hawthorne was not inclined to take it; and Longfellow, hearing the story, asked permission to use it for a poem. Whittier, oddly enough, had also been reading about the Acadian exodus with the plan of writing himself on some portion of it, but gave up the subject when he heard that Longfellow had taken it up. The tale was one well suited to Longfellow's genius; but it is

unlikely that he could have made as much of it as he did, had it not been that he was moved to make use of the hexameter in his narrative. To this then almost unknown metre he had been attracted by Tegnér's *Children of the Lord's Supper*, which he had translated in 1841. His innovation had been severely criticised; but he had sense enough to see that, whatever the relations were between the accentual system he proposed and the hexameter of Homer or Virgil, the modern form, considered by itself, was pleasing, harmonious, and well adapted to use in continued narrative.

A good subject and a novel medium thus at hand, Longfellow began his task with high hopes, entering in his journal in November, 1845: "Set about *Gabrielle*, my idyl in hexameter, in earnest. I do not mean to let a day go by without adding something to it, if it be but a single line." In spite of many unexpected interruptions, he continued to keep the

project well in mind and to gather material with much pains, mainly from Haliburton's History of Nova Scotia and from many works descriptive of American scenery. He was also considerably aided by a "diorama" then being exhibited, which gave a truthful representation of the Mississippi River. The poem was completed early in 1847, carefully revised in proof, and published late in the same year. Its success was remarkable. Before it Longfellow was an excellent minor poet. He was thereafter the author of a long poem very widely read and much admired. *Evangeline* was not only the beginning, but a considerable part of the tower of song that was shortly to make him the best-known English poet of the century.

Evangeline is generally regarded as Longfellow's most popular poem, though it can hardly be admitted to be his best; and, now that it has stood the test of half a century, it may be assumed that

public opinion has arrived at some sane conclusion as to its peculiar merits and demerits. We should probably all agree that it is to be considered as a singularly rapid and skilful piece of narrative, depending for its special charm partly on the pleasingly sentimental pathos of its theme, partly on its many descriptions of romantic scenery, partly on the fact that it was in two respects an innovation: it was the first good poem of any length on an American subject, and it was the first and last (except *Miles Standish*) widely read poem in English hexameter. Adverse critics call attention to three special demerits, in their opinion: the halting rhythm, now and then absolutely prosaic and always unlike the classical hexameter; the absence from it of all compelling and stimulating thought; and the fact that the descriptions are plainly bookish. All these charges seem to me valid, but comparatively unimportant, except for purposes of demarcation.

The metre is, of course, not the classical quantitative system, but that has no bearing on the subject; and it not infrequently degenerates into easy prose, but it still remains true that, as a rule, Longfellow's hexameter is pleasing to the ear. There is no thought of weight in the poem, but for that it is vain to seek in Longfellow's work. His mind did not bite, so to speak, on any subject. He was not a thinker, but a teller of sweet tales. And, if the present writer may be allowed to express a purely personal opinion, I do not see that Longfellow is in the end behind other English poets of his time. Their much-lauded philosophy, it seems to me, has already been found, with the rarest possible exceptions, to be of little or no value; and it is as well to have no thought at all, like *Evangeline*, as to attempt thought that will not stand the test of close analysis, accurate information, and a calm and wise insight into the framework of

human existence. As to the bookish character of the descriptive passages, essentially the same reply may be made. Longfellow was a bookish man: he travelled little in his own land; he lived indoors; his habit of mind was not that of accurate observation. Throughout his whole work there is little to show that he had special familiarity with bird or beast or flower. To these he gives generic epithets, thus betraying that he had not seen them often enough, watched them closely enough, for them to present themselves to his mind in any other way than that conventional, or natural to the superficial onlooker. We turn to other poets for creative description. Longfellow, we can only repeat, is a teller of pleasing tales; and his method of description is that best suited to his rapidity of narrative and most adapted to the understanding of the great body of readers, themselves unobservant of detail.

Evangeline, then, must remain a swift and pleasingly sentimental tale, which all must read once with admiration. Its tone was that common in the middle of the century, when sentiment was the keynote of almost all verse. In maturity we are now less inclined to find such poetry highly stimulating, for the whole tendency of our reflective life lies in other channels; but what was then the food of the grown is still proper nutriment for the young, on whose as yet unstable and undeveloped emotions it exerts an excellent influence, purifying and ennobling. From its value in this respect it is hard to see how time can detract. Though not a great poem, it is one perennially beloved, as well as one famous for its historical position — the first of its kind in a great literature.

Evangeline was scarcely finished before Longfellow turned, in a fit of apparent reaction, to a prose romance of a New England village, *Kavanagh*, the least im-

portant of all his works, and yet one on which he toiled faithfully and with affection, completing it only in 1849. Were there space, it would be interesting to discuss at length this little volume, which Hawthorne thought so true, and other good contemporary judges spoke scarcely less highly of; for it belongs to the same class as Judd's *Margaret*, and is, like that romance, an excellent illustration of the extent to which in literature, as in science, even men of great intelligence see only what they have been taught to see. What Longfellow and his friends thought was true to life was as far from being so as well could be. This we can all recognise, thanks to the labours of novel-writers whose eyes became open to what lay before them — just as pathologists are now plainly discerning under their microscopes cells and bacteria which they might always have seen, had they known they were there. Longfellow's village is not at all

akin to reality, but just the village that, with his reading of Richter, he believed he should find; and in this study of his life and art it is not necessary to dwell on it further, save to add that, as in his other prose works, much of his own mood and personal experience is readily discovered, especially in the figure of the schoolmaster (professor), bound to his uncongenial tasks, whom others saw "daily moiling and delving in the common path, like a beetle, and little thought that underneath that cold and hard exterior lay folded delicate and golden wings, wherewith, when the heat of the day was over, he soared and revelled in the pleasant evening air."

In the next year he published a little volume, chiefly of lyrical poems, entitled *The Seaside and the Fireside*, headed by the beautiful "Building of the Ship," in which his style first exhibited the extraordinary simplicity, rapidity, and variety which were thereafter to be

its chief characteristics. Of the single piece of pure narrative, "King Witlaf's Drinking-horn," he recorded that, after toiling for hours at *Kavanagh*, he "wound up" with this, "painting it with a sweep of the pencil just before dinner," thereby illustrating how swift was the working of his art when the subject was one suited to his genius and how halting when he touched on alien ground. Several of the poems dealt with tender sentiments, one of his strongest holds upon the people at large — the simple at heart, who, sorrowing dumbly, are grateful to the singer who expresses for them, with sweet imagery, their common, but not for that less potent, emotions. Most of the contents show the traces of his old didacticism and fondness for moralising by figures, here refined and subdued, and reaching their highest point in "The Building of the Ship," which is perfection in its kind, where the fundamental image is broad

and naturally human, and supports without a tremor, like a well-constructed bridge, not only the load it is designed to carry, but its own weight and that of its fitting adornments. How unlike it is, in its dignity and force, in the stimulus it gives to emotion, in its pleasing pictures, in the skill with which the simple similitude is rounded, to the crude and youthful "Excelsior"!

Out of these dull years, during which his creative faculties were gathering themselves for a new effort, Longfellow emerged late in 1849, when he entered in his journal, "And now I long to try a loftier strain — the sublimer Song whose broken melodies have for so many years breathed through my soul." The reference is to a resolve which he had made eight years before, "to undertake a long and elaborate poem by the holy name of Christ, the theme of which would be the various aspects of Christendom in the Apostolic, Middle,

and Modern Ages." It was the second division of his theme, portraying the childlike faith in Christ which he conceived as lighting up the dark and sinful Middle Ages, which he now took up in the shape of a long poem in dialogue form, based on Hartmann von der Aue's *Der arme Heinrich*. It was begun in April, 1850, and published in 1851, without the intimation that it bore any relation to a larger whole.

The Golden Legend was received favourably, but not with great enthusiasm. Unlike *Evangeline*, it treated no novel subject, made use of no new metre; and the public to which it could appeal was, of necessity, less wide. *Evangeline* can be understood by any one who can read; but to the understanding of *The Golden Legend* some smattering of mediæval lore — or, in its absence, at least an imagination strong enough to grapple in some fashion with things remote in time and spirit — is indispensable. To its

more limited and more sophisticated public, however, *The Golden Legend* appealed with far greater force than *Evangeline*. A skilful narrative, rich in the variety of its several metres, each handled with ease and power, it is from beginning to end delightful and free from all monotony. It not only brings out with clearness the simple essence of the tale — the saving faith of the peasant maiden regenerating the lax-minded noble — but pleases by a multitude of delicious pictures of farm and castle, city and cloister, all steeped with the romantic glamour for which at that time we sought only in the Middle Ages. In that peculiar glamour no English poet is superior to Longfellow ; and the reason for his pre-eminence lies in his wide and accurate reading of mediæval European literature — a reading rich especially in the lines that appealed most to the imagination. His professional knowledge and his poetic skill

allowed him so to weave together the various threads of curious lore that the book may be regarded as one of the best means that the youthful or inexperienced reader could have to put himself into sympathy with certain sides of the mediæval spirit. Indeed, Ruskin declared that Longfellow read the heart of the monk better than had all the theologians. It must be acknowledged, however, that his conception of the Middle Ages was characteristically incomplete. His peculiarly unintellectual temperament never allowed him to see all parts of a subject or to ponder on their logical relations. As a division of a larger whole, as a canticle of his great poem, whose theme was as grand as that of Dante's, *The Golden Legend* does not deserve much consideration. The facts are trivial, the treatment superficial, the point more the pretty elaboration of a popular preacher than an acute expression of a type of mediæ-

val Christianity. What he chose from the results of his long reading was not the whole truth, in all its ugliness and incompleteness, but quaint and touching pictures. Even his devil and his erring monks are gentle and gracious souls. He gave us the sweet kernel of the bitter fruit — the picturesqueness, the pathos, the faith, the glamour of the Middle Ages.

Again a period of lethargy, and the poet's mind lighted on its greatest theme — not perhaps in intrinsic merit, but certainly in point of novelty and popularity. He had from boyhood been interested in the history of the American Indians, feeling the sympathy for a vanishing race that once held so noble a continent, and led so wild and free a life, which must inevitably possess the imaginative and contemplative spirit; and about 1854 it occurred to him to write about them. In that year his project took shape almost instantaneously. He

would "weave together their beautiful traditions," and would use as his measure the haunting metre of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*, with its odd parallelism and repetitions. A more prolonged search could not possibly have led him to a surer path. The unusual metre, with its flatness, its slow droning sing-song, was peculiarly fitted for the telling of the dim old Indian legends, fragmentary, half-grotesque, handed down by oral tradition, in a sort of sacred chant. The *Kalevala*, too, gave him more than a measure. Here he had at his hand the very sort of epic the Indians might have had, could they have woven together their scattered and imperfect traditions — an epic crude and semi-monstrous, as of a people who had scarce attained to orderly human intelligence. In Schoolcraft's volumes he had all the material ready for his shaping, material no poet before him had more than touched upon. And he of all men was the one

fitted to handle it. The real Indian he did not know. Of the West, and of savage life and wild scenery, he was totally ignorant. It was a pure matter of books. The Indian age of glory had passed away without its record in literature. He was its literary executor. Extraordinarily simple-minded, unintellectual by temperament, with the most exquisite skill in narrative, trained by years of experiment in seizing the very essence of alien literatures, and so deftly moulding them as to fit them to the ears of his own race, he was able to accomplish what was almost impossible. *Hiawatha* is said by those whose childhood has been spent in the wigwam or who are intimately acquainted with Indian life, to have something of the special solemn charm of the native legends still told by old men in winter camps remote from the degenerating influences of the white settlements. To us of Indo-Aryan blood, too, it has the continuity, the concreteness that we

crave. Under Longfellow's hands the tales lost in grotesqueness and gained in definiteness, without parting with the vague incompleteness which lies at their heart.

The success of *Hiawatha* was even greater than that of *Evangeline*, and it is usually regarded as his most important work. As simple as *Evangeline* and as broad in its appeal to the young and to the unlettered, it deals with a higher, a more national theme, in the treatment of which it stands first without a successor. Emerson, who seemed always to estimate Longfellow's work justly, though repelled by the absence of the intellectual side in it, wrote to him that he found "this Indian poem very wholesome; sweet and wholesome as maize; very proper and pertinent for us to read, and showing a kind of manly sense of duty in the poet to write." He was thus impressed by its highest quality, that it is to a marked degree an American poem,

native to the soil. No European could have conceived it. And, thanks to that distinguishing virtue of material and of tone, it is sure of permanence in literature. Almost invariably read in childhood, and not often reread later, it teaches us the music of Indian names, reveals to us the ancient sense of kinship betwixt man and beast, and creates for us an aboriginal fairyland, which, absorbed and appropriated by the youthful mind, is subconsciously present in the recurrent imaginative delight, felt by all who at times come close to inland nature, in the thought of the primitive inhabitants of such a glorious domain. To European children it has a more vivid charm in that, like Cooper's tales, it conveys something of the glamour which the Old World, more readily than we ourselves, connected with the New World wilderness. And for all, American or Europeans, it has, apart from its connection with Indian legend, the

charm that came from Longfellow's gentle and tender heart, which, freed from its older melancholy, sang so gracefully of Hiawatha and Minnehaha as to make this primitive pair the type of all pure-hearted lovers.

From *Hiawatha*, Longfellow passed rapidly on to a more modern and even more American subject. On December 2, 1856, he records in his journal that he wrote the first scene in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. Precisely a year later he writes: "I begin a new poem, *Priscilla*, to be a kind of Puritan pastoral; the subject, the courtship of Miles Standish. This, I think, will be a better treatment of the subject than the dramatic one I wrote some time ago." And later entries show his delight in the composition, which was finished on March 22. *Miles Standish* stands, it seems to me, in every respect on a higher plane than *Evangeline*, and is, like "The Building of the Ship," to be regarded as perfect in

its kind. Shorter than *Evangeline*, with which it must obviously be compared, it does not allow the reader to become wearied with the metre, which is itself more flexible and less often sinks into common prose. The subject, too, is of a higher order: not the monotonous theme of a disconsolate maiden ever in pursuit of her lover, but one dealing with several characters and a variety of motives — a genuinely simple but vivacious little pastoral love tale, in which the strife of the suitors, the vicissitudes of the wooing, and the diverse personalities of Alden and Standish give variety to the narrative and interest to the plot. The tone of the poem, again, is more robust and manly than that of *Evangeline*. *Evangeline* was melancholy: *Miles Standish* is almost merry. The dull and pessimistic romanticism, under the vicious influence of which he had fallen in Germany at an epoch of great susceptibility, and which had continued to

scar his verse in happier years till it bade fair to become with him a set convention of manner, had now definitely passed away under the counter-influence of a happy marriage, freedom from care, and a saner literary environment. Lastly, Longfellow was, almost for the only time, dealing with matter of which he could make himself a thorough master. The scenes of *Evangeline*, with few exceptions, fell in parts of the continent on which the poet had never laid eyes. The material for *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha* he had to get at second or third hand from books. But here he was on surer ground. He consulted books, of course; and, with characteristic indifference to detail, he seems not to have visited Plymouth until after the poem was written. Like its predecessors, it lacks in detailed observation, and fails, by its blurred and generalised landscape, to invite careful and repeated reading. But in spite of these defects the poem is

founded upon the rock of fact. Longfellow knew the New England coast; for his summers were often spent at Nahant, and his boyhood had passed at Portland. The New England forests he had seen at Brunswick. With the life of the Pilgrims he was familiar by tradition. Their temper of mind, their earnest hearts and reticent tongues, their mysticism, their ambition, their iron constancy he had seen in later generations. He was thus able himself to check and correct his reading, and to visualise more clearly the records of olden times. From these sober records his genius thus prompted him to evolve a character apparently more original and more true than any other of his creations — Priscilla, the prim and demure Puritan maiden, a real and charming type of New England womanhood.

One further work, a group of ballads, belongs to this period of the poet's fruitfulness, and marks its close. Almost

alone among English poets, Longfellow had a fondness for Scandinavian literature. For English legends he had no special liking. It was the romance of the Continent that attracted him particularly, and there mainly that of Southern Europe, the spirit of whose literatures he caught with a sympathy rare among men of Teutonic stock. But he always turned to Swedish and Danish poetry with delight; and now, after reading Laing's translation of the *Heimskringla*, he was swept off his feet, as it were, by the strong wind of Norse saga, and in fifteen successive days wrote the group of stirring ballads comprising "King Olaf," afterwards published as the musician's first story in the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. For once the gentler side of his nature was subordinated; and he sang gladly of fighting and rapine, though through all the bloodshed shines King Olaf's faith in the White Christ for whom he conquered.

It was when Longfellow's powers were thus seemingly at their highest that the blow fell that put an end to his happiness and that marked the limit of the period in which he was capable of his best work. In July, 1861, his wife was severely burned, and died within a few hours. Of all mortals, he was created not to live alone. His tender nature craved constant and intimate companionship and affection of a kind that men cannot give, and his second marriage had been extraordinarily fortunate in that it furnished for him in every conceivable way the frictionless and fostering environment in which it was possible for a temperament of that peculiar gentleness to develop to the fullest extent.

V.

It will be remembered that it was the death of his first wife that awakened Longfellow from the lethargy into which he was falling as a young professor, fulfilling his duties punctiliously, but dropping steadily into the conventional routine of his calling. And it might have been anticipated — if we may reason in such a cold-blooded fashion — that the death of his second wife, shaking his nature to its very foundations, might have stimulated him to greater efforts in the desire to obtain a respite from his grief, or that this sudden extinguishing of his heart's joy would have changed the whole nature of his verse, adding to it a note of real despair. But such was not the case. His temperament was too finely poised, his nature too tender, his genius too fragile. He lived twenty years longer; and he wrote much, but little that was of value.

At times the old poetic passion swelled high within him, and what he composed had all the vigour and freshness of his happier days; but such occasions were rare, and the flame soon sank. What remains of his life can therefore be told briefly.

In 1835 George Ticknor had advised his bereaved friend to throw himself earnestly into some hard and definite task, and Longfellow tried the remedy without avail. At that period it was necessary that his awakening emotional life should subordinate his intellect. But now he was fortunate at having at hand a task extending over a period of several years, and severe enough to call into action all the powers of his mind except that of constructive imagination — the translation of *The Divine Comedy*.

He had been for more than thirty years a student of the poem, he had often read it in whole or in part with his college classes, and for some years he

had from time to time translated portions of it. It was natural that, without heart for original composition, he should now seek to complete his version of the whole poem; and no possible task could have been better suited to his genius or more appropriate to the circumstances. He was by far more skilful in translation than any man of letters of his time; and the poem itself is, without doubt, more perfectly adapted to prolonged study than any other part of the world's literature. This is not to say that Dante is greater than Homer or Shakspere, or that his poem is more perfect, more stimulating, more satisfying in all respects, than the classic epics or the superb body of plays that Shakspere left us, but simply that the peculiar traits of *The Divine Comedy* permit one to concentrate his mind on it, to the exclusion of almost all else, for a long period, without weariness. Shakspere is so Protean, his compositions so various,

of such changing moods, his method so impersonal, that no one can feel that he has made himself master of the whole range of thought. *The Divine Comedy* was the work of twenty years, but chronology plays no part in the student's reading. There are no shifting points of view, no contradictory moods. The first canto is attuned to the last and the last to the first. The whole is so absolutely definite in its details, so perfect in its proportions, so uniform in its method, so consistent in its purpose, that it seems less a poem than a piece of architecture — a solid universe in itself. To men stricken with grief or oppressed with care it thus becomes an actual refuge. Once within its walls, and the noises of the outer world beat only faintly on the ear and finally grow inaudible. It is, too, less an epic than one great lyric, one long cry for peace and justice. For the author's personality is the very keystone of his work.

It is Dante, Dante alone, that is speaking throughout. After repeated readings the poem thus gains an added concreteness and a consummate dignity, as being the perfected and final utterance of one solitary figure that in itself typifies all human endeavour and all human sorrow.

The translation of *The Divine Comedy*, with the preparation of the notes that accompany it, occupied Longfellow for nearly four years. He first set himself to his task in 1863; and until 1867 it was the subject of almost daily thought and labour, which had for him the added pleasure of being shared by his friends. He was especially aided by Lowell and by Mr. Norton, who formed with him the "Dante Club," to whom at regular intervals he read the successive cantos, and who criticised them in detail. Others often joined in these agreeable meetings, of which Mr. Norton and Mr. Howells have given us their reminis-

cences. The pleasure Longfellow thus gained may be gathered from this one of many entries in his journal: "June 13th [1866]. The last Dante reading. Lowell, Greene, Holmes, Howells, Furness, and F. Wilson. *Paradiso xxxiii.* A very pleasant supper, which did not break up until two in the morning. After it Greene and I sat talking in the study till three. The day was dawning and the birds singing when we went to bed."

The translation itself was of a high order of merit. The only complete version in English had been that of Cary, whose aim did not contemplate a close rendering, and whose knowledge of the original was defective. Longfellow attempted to translate *The Divine Comedy* line for line and almost word for word, following Dante's metre, but neglecting his rhymes, which, indeed, it is impossible to reproduce in our uninflected tongue. The result showed almost impeccable ac-

curacy, great vividness of expression, and a considerable degree of ease, though, unlike Parsons's partial translation, and unlike much of Longfellow's other work, it does not at any time give the impression of an original poem. It is always a translation that we are reading and one made with punctilious scrupulousness. We are stepping in Dante's very footprints. As a scholar's translation, Ticknor was just in saying that he knew "nothing like it; *nil simile aut secundum*," though since then Mr. Norton, with equal fidelity, has accomplished the same task in English prose — on the whole, the most satisfactory medium for the people at large. In verse, however, Longfellow's rendering remains unexcelled.

When this laborious task was over, an easier took its place — the compilation of a series of *Poems of Places*, a sort of arm-chair travelling, as he styled it, which for several years interested him greatly. The original work of these last years con-

sisted in the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, a large number of miscellaneous lyric poems and translations, *The Divine Tragedy*, *The New England Tragedies*, and the unfinished drama, *Michael Angelo*. These we may now rapidly discuss.

The first series of the *Tales of a Wayside Inn* was written in 1860–63, the second and third just ten years later. In the last two some failing of power is felt; but they are still remarkable productions, and the first is story-telling of a very high order. Indeed, it is to the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, of all Longfellow's works, that the mature reader is most likely to recur at intervals with fresh delight. Nowhere is his extraordinary skill and grace in narrative more evident, nowhere are his pen pictures more vivid and pleasing. In English it is with Chaucer that he can be best compared. Nor does the modern poet suffer by the juxtaposition. He has the greater skill and charm, the greater variety and

melody. That which marks him as a minor poet is only the lack of penetrating intelligence, the fact that in our intricate modern world he had allowed himself to be a gentle dreamer, and not an acute thinker as well. But it is our good fortune that what he lost in force he gained in sweetness.

To the considerable body of minor verses which he wrote in his later years, less full praise can be given; but this was only natural. By the law of his life he could now have no new emotions. His songs had been sung, the book was closed; and whatever came to his lips was for him and for the world merely a reminiscence of his earlier work or its faint aftermath. *Michael Angelo*, the long unfinished drama, has in it fine lines and fine scenes; nor is there wanting a pathetic undertone of sympathy — old age writing of old age. But there is no force in it, no man's strength; and it fell incomplete from the tired hands.

The New England Tragedies, which he imagined as the completion of the trilogy that should treat of Christ on earth, revealing faith under persecution and religion grown into dogmatism, seemed scarcely Longfellow's work at all, so dull and graceless are they.

Only in *The Divine Tragedy* do we find the pristine charm. It is a dramatisation — as Longfellow understood the word — of the gospel narrative; and those who have read it only in maturity can but dimly appreciate its effect upon the youthful heart, taught to find in the sacred story only points of doctrine, helpless to conceive of it in other than its bare outlines. Here were not only the familiar words — scarcely altered, but turned into melody — not only the familiar personages, but the whole Oriental background, the whole historical setting of the great scene. Here Mary Magdalene and Pontius Pilate and, best of all, Barabbas were living actors, picturesque

and vivid; and here, too, were others of which the childish imagination had not dreamed — Menahem the Essenian, Simon Magus, and Helen of Tyre. Could Longfellow have written *The Divine Tragedy* in his youth, when the enthusiastic reception of Willis's scriptural poems pointed the way, it might have become one of his most famous works. But the century was waning, and the time was no longer ripe. Narrative in verse was paling before the novel; and it was a mediocre prose tale of Christ's times that caught the fancy of the great reading public, especially the young. *The Divine Tragedy*, by this external change of taste, was barred from its proper audience, while to the more select body of the instructed it can only faintly appeal on account of the absence of the intellectual element. Modern research has brought light into many obscure places in that ancient Oriental world; and, though our faith be unchanged, our

understanding has become too broad for a poem in which is ignored so much that is essential to the intelligence.

Bereft of joy, Longfellow still spent these years in peace. Five children remained to him, and their care and education helped to occupy his time and engage his affections. It is said, too, that a greater comfort was not wanting. Always a believer in immortality, he found no difficulty in accepting a main tenet of spiritualism, or spiritism, that the beloved dead are not absent from us and share dimly in our happiness. Of friends he had, as ever, a host; and his house was a place of pilgrimage, not only for travellers of distinction, but for children and lovers of his verse. To the poor he gave freely of his goods and of his time. Most content in his own house, he was welcome everywhere. He made little journeys from time to time, often for his children's sake and never to a great distance, except when in 1868–69

he visited Europe again with his family, receiving honours everywhere and looking for the last time on lands he had long known well. It was the golden age of his prime, a tender picture of which has been drawn by Mr. Howells, who said: —

"All men that I have known, besides, have had some foible (it often endeared them the more), or some meanness, or pettiness, or bitterness; but Longfellow had none, nor the suggestion of any. No breath of evil ever touched his name; he went in and out among his fellow-men without the reproach that follows wrong; the worst thing I ever heard said of him was that he had *gêne*, and this was said by one of those difficult Cambridge men who would have found *gêne* in a celestial angel. Something that Björnstjerne Björnson wrote to me, when he was leaving America after a winter in Cambridge, comes nearer suggesting Longfellow than all my talk. The Norsemen,

in the days of their stormy and reluctant conversion, used always to speak of Christ as the White Christ; and Björnson said in his letter, 'Give my love to the White Mr. Longfellow.'"

Thus Longfellow lived for twenty tranquil years — years growing lonelier as one by one his earlier friends departed; and thus he died on March 24, 1882. He was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery at Cambridge. A public funeral service was held in the Harvard College Chapel; and memorial meetings, services, and addresses in many places throughout the country bore witness to the genuine admiration, affection, and respect with which the aged poet was regarded in the United States. Two years later, with appropriate ceremonies, a bust of Longfellow was placed in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, a lasting testimonial of similar feelings on the part of Englishmen.

Longfellow's death called forth a multitude of biographical and critical articles, both in this country and abroad, in most of the best of which there revealed itself a distinct understanding of the various qualifications that must be made in respect to the permanency and universality of his just fame. The American essays called attention to the fact that he was now preeminently the children's poet; the British essays, while referring to him as the most popular of modern English poets, deemed him especially the poet of the "middle class." The phrase is a meaningless one to American ears; but if it be taken to refer to such persons — the bulk of the population in any country — as have been prevented by deficiencies in education or experience from gaining a clear insight into the real facts of life, and into their relations and meaning, then the British as well as the American criticism will hold good.

Longfellow is the poet of the comparatively immature and the comparatively inexperienced.

It must at once be added that to be read and enjoyed by the classes we have mentioned is under no circumstances a reproach: it is indeed a high honour, for which most poets strive, and strive in vain. It is no small thing for a singer to have a heart so pure and simple, an intellect so little isolated by years of foreign travel, of special study, of long association with men of distinction, that there is no barrier between him and the heart and intelligence of the people at large, of nineteen-twentieths of the race. Of American poets, only Whittier approached Longfellow in this respect of wide acceptation, and he was less national in his appeal; of modern British poets, only Scott. And Longfellow must be praised for the uses he made of this high opportunity. He familiarises his readers with the grace and flow of verse,

with its melody and harmony. He introduces them to the beauty of olden times, of remote places, of foreign literature. He reveals to them the glory of the elementary virtues — faith and hope and love, optimism and aspiration. He is thus a preparatory, an educative poet, making ready the intelligences of the fit for the more weighty and intricate teachings of literature, the understanding of which is reserved for the few.

Nor does the fact that he is a poet of the many prevent him from being also, to some degree, a poet of the elect, and this for several reasons. Those who have learned to appreciate what we may roughly call less elementary poetry are not therefore cut off from their earlier and simpler enjoyments, and may — and, indeed, probably do — often return to the reading of their youthful or less experienced days with a new zest. Again, these more enlightened

readers are increasingly susceptible to the delights of tasting again the pleasures of earlier times, of putting themselves in the places of the men of other centuries and seeing the world with other eyes. The little New England of Longfellow's day, ardent and serene, high in thought and noble in motive, isolated and individual, has passed away completely, but not without leaving a beautiful memory in the literature of the race, which the scholar and the dilettante, using the word in its best sense, must long treasure. Of this striking period Longfellow is one of the most typical representatives. Lastly, it must be remembered that, if the poets of the few have perhaps the higher glory, they also surely have usually the disadvantage of an insecure position. The tastes of the few are subject to a more rapid change. For a generation or two we make our special cult of some special poet, following him as a leader,

a prophet, an interpreter, a revealer of new truths. And of a sudden the kaleidoscope shifts, the sum of human knowledge grows greater, human activity takes new forms, human ambition seeks new goals; and the famous teacher is discarded. Longfellow, with his wider but less pretentious appeal to a more stable public, seems, on the whole, more sure of his modest place than some whom the critics of the day might rank as his superiors.

Whitman, apparently so different from Longfellow in his ideals no less than in his art, has yet praised him most wisely: —

"Longfellow in his voluminous works seems to me not only to be eminent in the style and forms of poetical expression that mark the present age (an idiosyncrasy, almost a sickness, of verbal melody), but to bring what is always dearest as poetry to the general human heart and taste, and probably must be

so in the nature of things. He is certainly the sort of bard and counteractant most needed for our materialistic, self-assertive, money-worshipping, Anglo-Saxon races, and especially for the present age in America — an age tyrannically regulated with reference to the manufacturer, the merchant, the financier, the politician, and the day workman — for whom and among whom he comes as the poet of melody, courtesy, deference — poet of the mellow twilight of the past in Italy, Germany, Spain, and in Northern Europe — poet of all sympathetic gentleness — and universal poet of women and young people. I should have to think long if I were asked to name the man who has done more, and in more valuable directions, for America.

"To the ungracious complaint-charge of his want of racy nativity and special originality, I shall only say that America and the world may well be rever-

ently thankful — can never be thankful enough — for any such singing-bird vouchsafed out of centuries; without asking that the notes be different from those of other songsters; adding what I have heard Longfellow himself say, that ere the new world can be worthily original, and announce herself and her own heroes, she must be well saturated with the originality of others, and respectfully consider the heroes that lived before Agamemnon."

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The works of Longfellow, including the translation of *The Divine Comedy*, are published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. in a uniform and definitive edition in ten volumes. The poems are also published in several one-volume editions, the latest and most complete of which is known as the Cambridge Edition. First editions of the separate volumes, from the *Voices of the Night* down, are still not very rare; and equally good editions, printed from the original plates, are comparatively common, and are naturally to be preferred to the modern collected editions.

For an accurate bibliography of his works, see Foley, *American Authors* (Boston, 1897), the appendix to the *Life* mentioned below, and Anderson's bibliography attached to Robertson's volume in the "Great Writers Series." A chronological list of the separate

critical comment except that of the most general kind. This work completely supersedes the shorter biographies of F. H. Underwood, George Lowell Austin, and W. S. Kennedy, all published in 1882, none of which contains any matter of importance not accurately recorded in this authorised life. The biography by Eric S. Robertson, in the "Great Writers Series" (London, 1887: Walter Scott), is without value. Several short biographies have appeared in French and German, the best of which is that by Karl Knortz (Hamburg, 1879). The most important account of Longfellow's later life is that given by Mr. W. D. Howells in his "The White Mr. Longfellow," in *Harper's Magazine* for August, 1896, reprinted in his *Literary Friends and Acquaintance* (New York, 1900).

III. A list of critical articles up to 1887 is given in Anderson's bibliography

mentioned above and in the appendix to the *Life*. The best criticism will, however, be found in the more important works on American literature, and especially in the following: —

POETS OF AMERICA. By Edmund Clarence Stedman. (Boston and New York, 1885: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)

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